CONSTANCE:

A NOVEL.

THE FIRST LITERARY ATTEMPT OF

A YOUNG LADY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

——————— ON MY STRAIN
PERHAPS SOME COLD FASTIDIOUS JUDGE
CASTS A DISDAINFUL EYE, AND CALLS MY TOIL,
AND CALLS THE LOVE AND BEAUTY WHICH I SING
THE DREAM OF FOLLY. AKENSIDE.

VOLUME II.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

CONSTANCE.

CHAP. I.

HOSPITALITY.

IN a ſtate little ſhort of diſtraction, Conſtance threw herſelf into the coach, and Lady Maria kindly, and perhaps intentionally erring, in attributing all her perturbation to the pain of leaving Mrs. Stavenell, encouraged her giving way to her feelings rather than ſtriving againſt them. The trial ſhe had ſo dreaded was now over; and when ſhe grew more compoſed, and could think on the victory ſhe had obtained, not ſo properly over Lord Calorne as over herſelf, ſhe hoped ſhe ſhould derive thoſe conſolations from it which would reconcile her to her fate.

For the firſt three hours ſhe bore ſcarcely any ſhare in the converſation: a ſingle affirmative or negative was all ſhe could command. Lord Farn-

ford laughed at her; Lady Emma joined him, and affected to pity Lord Calorne, till Lady Maria repreſſed her brother's mirth and her ſiſters volubility by ſaying, that Miſs Fitzarthur would have cauſe to wiſh ſhe had choſen a leſs eligible mode of conveyance, if ſhe was, while with them, to be reſtrained from, or ridiculed for expreſſing that regret at parting from her friends which it was to be expected it would occaſion: his lordſhip owned his error, and ſubmitted to reproof; Lady Emma became ſilent; and Conſtance who would have undergone any thing rather than appear ungrateful, exerted herſelf to be chearful.

The travellers ſlept one night on the road, and ſhe hoped to reach Marſtonbury by ten the next evening. It was determined that when they ſtopped on the ſecond day to dine, a ſervant ſhould be ſent to Sir Edward Fitzarthur's with a letter, which his daughter had before her leaving town written, to apprize the family of her return; and as Lord Farnford's houſe was within thirty miles of Marſtonbury, ſhe had prevailed on thoſe to whom ſhe was indebted for her ſpeedy journey to paſs the night there; well aſſured that both her father and mother would be pleaſed with an opportunity of acknowledging perſonally an obligation conferred on her.

But, when they arrived at the inn where they were to dine, ſome of the ſervants told Lord Farnford that a bridge about nine miles ſhort of Marſtonbury

ſtonbury, was impaſſible: this made it neceſſary to change their route, and as it would conſiderably lengthen their way, he propoſed they ſhould reſt till the next day at his houſe, which was at a ſmall diſtance from the road they muſt go; to this Conſtance was very averſe, and would have proceeded although the circumlocution muſt have detained them till paſt midnight, all conſiderations yielding to her ardent deſire of returning home: ſhe was not, however, ſo childiſhly impatient as to diſregard reaſon, and a promiſe from Lord Farnford that his carriage ſhould be ready at eight in the morning, and that her letter ſhould be forwarded immediately, prevailed on her to ſubmit, though reluctantly, to this delay.

They reached Farnford Park while it was daylight: and his lordſhip and his ſiſters took great pleaſure in ſhewing Conſtance the houſe and grounds; it was, though not the chief ſeat of the family, that being Pictbourn Caſtle in the north, a princely reſidence: the houſe had been in the late earl's time, moſt magnificently rebuilt, and ſince his death great additions had been made to the eſtate: the novelty and extreme beauty of the ſcene a little raiſed Miſs Fitzarthur's ſpirits, and ſhe hardly regretted the accident that had driven them out of their courſe: ſhe expreſſed to Lady Emma, as they were walking at a diſtance from Lord Farnford and his eldeſt ſiſter, the pleaſure which the proſpect of the circumjacent country

afforded her, and owned that ſhe had never ſeen ſo beautiful a ſpot.—Will it not make you relent? ſaid Lady Emma, taking her hand, ſee what you have refuſed.—Were it the Garden of Eden, replied Conſtance, I muſt refuſe it in ſuch circumſtances. At that inſtant Lord Farnford came up, and his ſiſter retired. Conſtance would have turned back to join Lady Maria, had ſhe not ſeen her in cloſe converſation with Lady Emma, who had ſtopped her.—Well, madam, ſaid Lord Farnford, what do you think of my dwelling?—I ſhould do it great injuſtice, replied Miſs Fitzarthur, if I did not think it exquiſitely delightful.—It wants one thing to render it pleaſant to me, returned his lordſhip. Conſtance would not venture to aſk what the deficiency was; but he who ſeldom wanted the encouragement of interrogation to diſcloſe his ſentiments, ſoon gave her to underſtand what it was, by repeating that line of Thompſon's,

'Theſe fields, the maſter, all—my fair are thine.'

She could not be angry at the intimation, though ſhe would rather it had been with-held; but affecting not to take the hint, ſhe continued her obſervation on the beauties which environed her; and ſeeing Lady Maria diſengaged and coming towards her, ſhe embraced the ſecurity her preſence inſured her.

As Lord Farnford had hitherto behaved to her with the moſt perfect reſpect and aſſiduous politeneſs, her uneaſineſs at being his gueſt aroſe chiefly from her eagerneſs to return to Marſtonbury; ſhe, therefore,

therefore, during the evening endeavoured, by appearing chearful and ſatisfied, to convince him and his ſiſters that ſhe was not inſenſible of the civilities they had ſhewn her; and begging Lord Farnford to give directions to his ſervants who were to go with her in the morning to be very punctual, ſhe took her leave for the night.

At her particular deſire ſhe ſhared Lady Maria's bed, and the fatigue of body and mind which ſhe had undergone proving a ſoporific, it overcame reflection; ſhe ſlept without diſturbance, and roſe in the morning pleaſed with the interview which ſhe hoped a few hours would conduct her to.

The two ladies went down ſtairs together at ſeven o'clock; a dejuné of tea, coffee, chocolate, cakes, and fruits extorted from the ſpring, covered a table in the ſaloon, at which Lord Farnford and Lady Emma were in converſation, waiting for Miſs Fitzarthur. As the clock ſtruck eight, the poſt-chaiſe came to the door, and Lord Farnford prepared to accompany Conſtance: this civility ſhe would have waved, as ſhe muſt then be alone with him, and ſhe could hardly determine whether it was to his ſenſe of honour or to want of opportunity that ſhe was indebted for the propriety with which he had behaved: but he inſiſted on going with her, ſaying, that he had promiſed to deliver her ſafe to her father, and he would ſcrupulouſly perform his engagement; after the kindneſſes ſhe had received in his houſe ſhe could not ſay ſhe would not

truſt him, and therefore yielded to his politeneſs, wiſhing moſt heartily that Lady Maria could go with her; but her ladyſhip, whoſe conſtitution was far from good, was ſo much fatigued by her journey, that Conſtance forbore preſſing it.

They had travelled about fourteen miles, Lord Farnford ſtill behaved well, and endeavoured to entertain her, when the carriage ſtopped, and he inquiring the cauſe, was told by the poſtillion that one of the horſes had loſt his ſhoe, and as the road before them was newly gravelled, he was afraid he would be lamed: his lordſhip ſeemed almoſt as much vexed as Conſtance, and more inclined to riſk laming the horſe than to ſubmit to the delay his being ſhod muſt occaſion; but the man ſaid if the horſe went without his ſhoe, it would, as he muſt go ſlowly, hinder them longer than the time neceſſary for ſhoeing them: Lord Farnford then blamed their coming with only a pair of horſes and aſked whether they could not go on to the next village, but they were eight miles diſtant from it, and it was at laſt agreed that they ſhould return back a quarter of a mile to a farm houſe which was occupied by a tenant of Lord Farnford's where they ſhould wait, and that the horſe ſhould be taken back to the town two miles behind them.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

PROTECTION.

THIS ſcheme was immediately adopted: Lord Farnford's tenant, who was a widow with four young children, received them very civilly, and preſſed Miſs Fitzarthur to go up ſtairs to their better room, ſaying, the kitchen was not a fit place for ſuch a lady: this diſtinction ſhe declined; ſhe hoped they ſhould not be detained there long, and ſhe was much pleaſed with the children: the woman however urged it, and Lord Farnford ſuggeſting that the preſence of ſtrangers was a reſtraint on the family, ſhe accepted her offer, and followed her. Lord Farnford ſtaid a few minutes below, and when he returned to Conſtance, ſhe remarked to him the exceeding neatneſs and ruſtic elegance of the room.

'The whited walls, the nicely ſanded floor,

'The varniſhed clock that click'd behind the door,

were to her ſubjects of admiration: he joined in her commendations of the apparent œconomy, and when ſhe pauſed ſaid—I hope, madam, notwithſtanding the delays we have met with, your journey on the whole has not been unpleaſant.—No, indeed, anſwered Conſtance frankly, I muſt own it has been far from unpleaſant, and I am very ſorry

my want of ſpirits has prevented my appearing gratified.—From your ingenious confeſſion, he replied, I may hope that the reſtraint I have impoſed on myſelf has convinced you of my reſpect.—I acknowledge myſelf much obliged to your lordſhip, returned ſhe, dreading what was coming, for your generous conduct towards me, and I truſt I ſhall be convinced, by the continuance of it during the ſhort remainder of our journey, of your diſintereſted regard for Mrs. Stavenell's family.—O cruel, cruel, Miſs Fitzarthur, exclaimed he, how unreaſonable, how tyrannical you are! what is it you exact of me? I have hitherto forced myſelf to a moſt painful ſilence, and you inſiſt on making it perpetual: can you expect me to forego the opportunity now offered me? and can you retain your native coldneſs and reſerve when I have ſo manifeſted my attachment to you.

She now grew ſeriouſly uneaſy, and endeavoured to come to a compoſition.—I do not, ſaid ſhe, enjoin you any thing like perpetual ſilence:—you may ſay what you pleaſe when I am at my father's.—Will you then, he aſked, promiſe to reward my aſſiduity and forbearance by accepting the offer I have made to you and Sir Edward, provided I do not mention this ſubject till you are at Marſtonbury? No apprehenſions could ever awe her to depart from integrity; ſhe therefore without heſitation anſwered, that ſhe had no power to diſpoſe of herſelf, that it was her father's choice which

determine her's, and that ſhe could make no ſuch agreement.

So, replied Lord Farnford, nettled at the innocent art ſhe had made uſe of, you really believe me ſuch a fool, as, out of falſe notions of delicacy, to ſlight the advantages of the preſent moment that I may be formally refuſed by your father; for when you are once in his houſe you can eaſily ſecure yourſelf from my importunity, if you then remain in this perverſe humour.—And pray, ſaid Conſtance, who began to be angry, what would your lordſhip have me do? do you think my ſentiments are on a ſudden, and for no cauſe changed? or that I wanted an opportunity of privately accepting that which I entreated my father to allow me to refuſe? I have repeatedly rejected your offer, and could not, even to him, excuſe ſuch verſatile and capricious behaviour.—This, replied his lordſhip, is only for the purpoſe of diſcouraging me: you might change your opinion, and Sir Edward not only would not be offended, but he would be pleaſed; for I know he thought you very wrong, and that he was much my friend.—I believe my father's indulgence and his intereſt for my welfare to be very great, ſaid Conſtance; but I have been always taught to avoid riſques, and to leave as little as poſſible to chance; he might approve—he might be diſpleaſed at my uſurping an authority which is ſolely his: if the chances are equal only, I am ſafeſt in refuſing; beſides what

motive have I to do otherwiſe? can I conſider your lordſhip as the object of my choice? or can I excuſe ſuch a breach of every thing that ought to bind me by any other than a palpable falſhood?—I will never do it—nothing on earth ſhall prevail on me. Saying this ſhe roſe from her ſeat, and walked with much diſcompoſure about the room. Lord Farnford perceived entreaty would have no effect; taking therefore, hold of her hand, he obliged her to ſit down by him, and ſaid calmly—I have ever obſerved that you have been willing to liſten to reaſon; hear then what I have to ſay, and I will leave it to your good ſenſe to determine how you ſhall act: It is uſeleſs to conceal from you that it is not to chance alone that I am indebted for this opportunity: I own what has the appearance of accident is a ſcheme which your cruelty has obliged me to adopt: all in this houſe are devoted to my intereſt: accept then the offer I again make you of my heart, my hand, and my fortune: remember you are in my power, and that I ſhall be very unwillingly driven to exert it.

Rage, terror, and amazement kept Conſtance for ſome moments ſilent, at length recovering, with all the dignity of conſcious innocence ſhe ſmiled contemptuouſly at Lord Farnford, and drawing her hand from his, ſaid—I am aſtoniſhed at the exceſs of your art, and the infamous baſeneſs of your treachery:—'tis perhaps true, that my perſon is in your power; but ſtill my will is at liberty, and

that

that I truſt will ever remain ſo: think what you are about, and be aſhamed of your purſuit: can any being exiſt more contemptible than Lord Farnford in his preſent ſituation? an Engliſh nobleman involved in falſhood and deceit, betraying the moſt important of all truſts, the care of a fellow creature; and ſuing to a girl, too wretched already, to trample on laws, which the moſt abandoned reverence, by promiſing to him that faith which ſhe cannot mean to keep, and profeſſing for him an affection which ſhe never did nor ever can feel! can you, my lord, borne to the higheſt honours, bleſt with the moſt ſupreme of all felicities, the power of making others happy, ſo baſely, ſo wickedly pervert the means beſtowed on you?—can you pretend that it is love for me, that leads you to wiſh me to render myſelf for ever wretched, without even ſelf approbation to ſupport me?—It is true I am unhappy, but I have all the conſolation which an intention of acting uprightly can afford me: do not endeavour to deprive me of this comfort; reſt ſatisfied with the conviction that I am not ordained for you; and if your regard for me is ſuch as you pretend, I am ſure you will ſubmit; believe me you will derive infinite ſatisfaction from the reflection that you have forborne to gratify yourſelf at the expence of another's happineſs. If on the contrary you are determined to perſevere in your deſign, I call Heaven to witneſs your guilt, and my reſolution never to be your wife:

a reſolution which though you could even compel me to break, will ſtand recorded for ever and teſtify againſt you at the tribunal to which I appeal. Here ſhe pauſed, and waited with trembling anxiety for his anſwer.

My dear Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid he, again ſeizing her hand, if any thing in the world could increaſe my love for, and my admiration of you, it is the proof you have given me that you are richly worth any ſacrifice I can make, any trouble I can undergo:—why my dear madam, I never hear'd ſuch eloquence:—'tis captivating,—'tis inchanting.—I ſhould never have forgiven myſelf if I had not afforded you an occaſion of diſplaying your oratorical abilities:—pray, was it extempore, or ſtudied for the next exigence:—My Lord, ſhe anſwered, her cheeks glowing with reſentment, if any thing had been wanting to convince me that you are loſt to every ſenſe of honour and humanity your inſulting me thus cruelly would have been infinitely more than ſufficient.—Oh, that you could at this moment ſee yourſelf, exerciſing the noble prerogative of mocking one, whom by the vileſt fraud you have made your priſoner!—the meaneſt wretch on earth would diſdain ſuch barbarity.—Indeed I believe, replied Lord Farnford, that few would take ſo much pains to obtain a conſent, which after all I have ſaid, you may withhold as long as you think it prudent; but I ſee you muſt be ocularly convinced that I do not boaſt greater power than I poſſeſs;

I poſſeſs; I will no longer keep you in ſuſpence whether it is beſt to be obſtinate, or to yield to my requeſt.—He then roſe and went acroſs the room.—It is impoſſible ſaid Conſtance that you can think of compelling me— have I *no* friends that will reſent it? or do you imagine they will approve your violence?—I know, replied his lordſhip, turning towards her with a confident ſmile, that I run ſome riſque; but you know

'Quand l'amour eſt bien fort, rien ne peut l'arretêr
'Ses projets ſeulement vont á ſe contenter;
'Et pourvu qu'il arrive au but qu'il ſe propoſe,
'Il croit que tout le reſte apres eſt peu de choſe.'

—Repeating theſe lines from Moliere he very cooly rang the bell, the door opened, and a man, whoſe dreſs beſpoke the ſacredneſs of his profeſſion, entered.—Now Madam, ſaid Lord Farnford, I hope you will believe me in earneſt—I have given you a very reaſonable time for deliberation, if your judgment is ſtill ſuſpended, I muſt beg leave to determine for you: I have no time to loſe, and muſt inſiſt on your conſenting to the immediate performance of the ceremony.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

SUPPLICATION.

CONSTANCE, who ſince the entrance of the clergyman had ſat with her eyes fixed on the ground, now looking up perceived, to her great joy, that it was Mr. Metward, Lord Calorne's friend: recollecting the attachment between them, and having frequently heard that he was under the greateſt obligations to Lord Ormington's family, ſhe hoped, when he ſhould know that this proceeding of Lord Farnford's was wholly againſt her inclination, he would not only withdraw his aſſent to it, but oppoſe it: ſhe therefore addreſſing herſelf to him, told him that ſhe truſted to find in him a protector, that ſhe could not believe he would ſo far forget his duty as to aſſiſt Lord Farnford in forcing her to become his wife, and in her diſtreſs forgetting that it was dubious how even Lord Calorne would in this juncture act, ſhe conjured him by his attachment to him, to be his repreſentative, and ſave her from the violence offered her.—Mr. Metward heard her ſilently: her hope that he was ignorant of the force put on her vaniſhed, yet ſhe flattered herſelf that his ſilence was the conſequence of indetermination, and in the moſt vehement terms beſought

beſought him not to aſſiſt Lord Farnford in the proſecution of his deſign, bidding him conſider what appearance he would make in the eyes of Lord Calorne, when the part he had acted ſhould be known: he liſtened to her with a ſmile, and anſwered:—I fear, madam, you are very ill acquainted with the real character and preſent ſituation of him to whom you ſo confidently think my aſſiſting Lord Farnford would be injurious. I will not venture to aſſert that Lord Calorne would approve of the active part I take, becauſe he might imagine it a troubleſome buſineſs, and one in which I had no concern; but I am equally ſecure from his cenſure: motives of prudence and convenience have obliged my friend Lord Calorne to give up one plan and adopt another; and this neceſſity leaves Miſs Fitzarthur entirely at liberty to diſpoſe of her hand as ſhe ſees proper: now, conſidering Lord Farnford's rank and fortune, and above all the ſincerity of his love, of which there cannot be a greater proof than the riſque he at this moment runs, in my humble opinion it cannot be ſo well beſtowed as on his lordſhip; and this conviction obliges me to confeſs my intention of giving my moſt hearty concurrence and aid to a ſcheme, which you, madam, without a ſhadow of reaſon ſeem reſolute to oppoſe.

All hope now deſerted Conſtance, ſhe ſaw not the moſt diſtant proſpect of relief. Lord Farnford endeavoured to calm and ſoothe the perturbation of her mind, viſible in her countenance, but ſhe

was

was as deaf to this language as ſhe had been unmoved by his threats; at laſt, ſeeing her almoſt in agonies, he ſeemed inclined to give way to the remorſe her diſtreſs had excited; he again ſeated her in her chair, and addreſt her in the mildeſt terms poſſible, ſaying that he muſt perſiſt becauſe he could not, without incurring the reſentment of her family, give her up.—You may ſafely give me up ſhe replied, a little encouraged by this reaſon for his perſeverance; if you will ſuffer me to go home, I promiſe you, on my word and honour, never to reveal a ſingle circumſtance that can injure you in the opinion of my friends:—he then after a ſhort pauſe, as if weighing the ſeveral conſiderations, ſaid, I could ſcarcely aſk you to credit the ſincerity of my paſſion did I not endeavour to relieve you from a ſituation which diſtreſſes you really far beyond my expectation;—I find I am deceived in you; you are inexorable, and one of us muſt be unhappy:—be it then my lot—it muſt be; for, however I ſucceed, I muſt ultimately be the ſufferer.—Calorne cannot loſe your regard, not even his marrying another woman will prevail on you to hate him; were it not for this infatuation I might be happy:—as it is, I muſt ſubmit to your obſtinacy: if then you will promiſe not to diſcloſe the attempt I have made—What are you doing? my lord, ſaid Mr. Metward, interrupting him and laying hold on his arm, what promiſe would you extort from Miſs Fitzarthur?—do you not know you

are

are deceiving her and yourſelf?—for it is impoſſible that this affair ſhould long remain ſecret.—O Mr. Metward, ſaid Conſtance, how can you ſo cruelly thwart Lord Farnford's generous purpoſe?—why will you oppoſe ſo laudable a deſign?—Becauſe replied Mr. Metward ſternly, I would neither have you deceive him, nor he you.—But, Sir, ſaid ſhe, I will bind myſelf by the moſt ſolemn promiſes, by every thing I hold dear or ſacred.—I do not doubt, madam, your readineſs to promiſe.—Nor I her willingneſs to perform, returned Lord Farnford.—I beg your lordſhip's pardon, ſaid his obſequious abettor, profoundly bowing, I meant not to inſinuate the ſmalleſt doubt of that; what I ſtarted at was the poſſibility of Miſs Fitzarthur's doing as ſhe might wiſh and intend:—Will not the length of time elapſed between her leaving London and reaching Marſtonbury, will not her being at your lordſhip's houſe and travelling with you raiſe ſuſpicions? and will ſhe not find herſelf under an abſolute neceſſity of accounting for theſe circumſtances by revealing what has paſſed?—Indeed Mr. Metward, indeed Lord Farnford, ſaid ſhe, no ſuſpicions ſhall ever make me reveal it; I will forgive every thing, and thank you moſt ſincerely for your generoſity.—Generoſity indeed! returned Mr. Metward, whoſe politeneſs was obliged to yield to his anger,—folly, madneſs I call it,—it deſerves no better name.—Why, ſaid Conſtance, will you give Lord Farnford's kindneſs ſuch odious

names?

names? what folly, what madneſs is there in his offer? would it not rather be madneſs to perſevere in what he knows cannot ſucceed?—It is madneſs, replied he to yield in the moment of victory, and it is folly to give up well founded hopes and expectations for fear he ſhould be cenſured by ſome intereſted perſons: but, my lord, he continued, how are you ſure, ſuppoſing, which is very improbable, that Miſs Fitzarthur ſhould be able to keep her promiſe, that others will not reveal it?—you know our agreement is a thouſand pounds on the performance of the ceremony, what reaſon have I to conceal your lordſhip's puſillanimity?

Conſtance conceiving hopes from Lord Farnford's wavering, anſwered,—Mercenary people are always to be ſecured; a ſmall addition will prevail on you.

This ſarcaſm Mr. Metward felt, but forbore replying to: he contented himſelf with ſaying he thought Lord Farnford much to blame to riſque the conſequences of ſuch miſtaken lenity:—and pray, ſaid he to him, ſince Miſs Fitzarthur's firmneſs ſtaggers you, tell me what ſort of behaviour you expected from her:—did you imagine that on your firſt declaring your intention ſhe would have ſaid it was perfectly agreeable to her, and that nothing in the world would make her ſo happy?—take my word for it, hereafter ſhe will laugh at your weakneſs, and blame your irreſolution.

The violent agitation of Conſtance's mind when ſhe ſaw herſelf with out hope of relief, had made Lord Farnford

Farnford heſitate; but now that ſhe was a little cheared, he grew leſs alarmed and felt leſs forcibly thoſe ſenſations which had almoſt inclined him to renounce his favourite project: he was ſtimulated afreſh by Mr. Metwards's arguments, and again urging that he was too far engaged to recede, he told her that however he might be diſpoſed to concur in her wiſhes, he was forbidden by his love and his reaſon; that therefore no earthly conſideration ſhould prevail on him to forego the reward of his labour, and that if ſhe would truſt to his honour, ſhe ſhould have no cauſe to repent her acquieſcence. —That either of her perſecutors ſhould now relent, it was as vain to expect as that ſhe ſhould be able to withſtand their power:—all avenues to Lord Farnford's pity were ſtopped; and ſhe had no means of even gaining her liberty, if ſhe did not conſent to the performance of the ceremony; the thought of this dreadful neceſſity was more than her hitherto exerted fortitude could bear: a thouſand times ſhe recalled to mind Lord Calorne's warning, that ſhe would repent her going:—a thouſand times ſhe blamed herſelf for quitting London, and would have gladly preferred all ſhe could have ſuffered by ſtaying there, to the extremity ſhe was now reduced to. Deſerted by every comfort, without a ray of hope to cheer her, ſhe had certainly ſunk under the weight that oppreſt her, had ſhe not recollected that, as Sir Edward and Lady Barbara were informed of her journey, her long abſence

ſence would alarm them, and as they knew with whom ſhe travelled, probably ſuch a ſearch might in a few hours be made for her as Lord Farnford's vigilance could not elude.—Revived by this idea, ſhe thought if ſhe could gain a little time, ſhe might yet be ſafe; and therefore addreſſing herſelf to Lord Farnford, ſhe ſaid:—Since I cannot but own the folly of reſiſting ſuch art and ſuch power as you can exert, if you will allow me time to recover the hurry of my ſpirits, and if nothing interpoſes to ſpare my unwilling compliance, I muſt conſent to what you aſk of me.

Lord Farnford could ſcarcely find words to expreſs his joy at this conditional promiſe:—the conſideration that it was extorted, and the effect of deſperation weighed not with him: he was gratified, and at whoſe expence he was not ſcrupulous to inquire; beſide his natural vanity and ſelf-love aſſured him that however averſe Conſtance might now be, when ſhe ſaw the inefficacy of reſiſtance ſhe would not only acknowledge the folly of the conteſt but be pleaſed with his victory: without regard to the means which had been uſed to prevail on her, or to what ſhe evidently ſuffered, he bleſſed his good fortune, his addreſs and perſeverance, and thanked her in the moſt paſſionate terms for her compliance. How much time ſhe ſhould be allowed was a queſtion ſtarted by Mr. Metward, and Lord Farnford referred it to her to propoſe: ſhe knew that whatever ſhe deſired would be thought

too

too long, and therefore named a week. Lord Farnford and his aſſiſtant exclaimed at the demand; and the fear that they ſhould inſiſt on their own terms made her ſhorten it to four days: this was deemed extravagant, and Mr. Metward ſaid, that till the morning was as long as ought to be allowed her, or ſhe could expect: Lord Farnford checked him by replying that he reſerved to himſelf a negative, but that the time ſhould be named by Miſs Fitzarthur; and at length, after much altercation, it was reduced to twenty-four hours: a ſhorter time than this would not have anſwered her end, and ſhe declared if it was not agreed to ſhe would ſtill withhold her conſent: this reſolution ſhe delivered in a tone ſo peremptory that her protector and his co-adjutor, hopeleſs of prevailing farther, thought it prudent to ſay they were contented.

As it was now paſt two o'clock, Lord Farnford was very urgent with Conſtance to take ſome refreſhment, but ſhe declined every thing excepting a glaſs of water; this he ordered to be brought, and the ſervant who came with it aſked him at what time he would dine.—It is indifferent to me, ſaid he:—Lady Farnford at what hour will you dine?—Conſtance had not attended to the ſervant's queſtion, nor was ſhe aware that it was to her that Lord Farnford addreſſed himſelf, till he repeated it; ſhe then, ſtarting at hearing herſelf ſo egregiouſly miſcalled, aſked him if he ſpoke to her.—He ſaid—Yes—She made him no anſwer, but walked away that the

ſervant

ſervant might not ſee her diſtreſs.—Four o'clock was named and the man diſmiſſed, when his lordſhip coming to her, ſaid,—You ſtarted at being a little prematurely called Lady Farnford, I muſt explain to you my reaſons for it: I have found it neceſſary to make my people believe that we are already married, and I beg you will avoid ſaying any thing that may undeceive them. Shocked at this additional inſtance of falſhood, ſhe exclaimed,—Good heaven! my lord, is it poſſible you can have ſo little regard to truth?—Indeed, interrupted Mr. Metward, I think, madam, you are obliged to my lord for his concern to preſerve your character, which in the opinion of the world, might have ſuffered by ſuch an excurſion as yours from London. —My character have ſuffered? returned ſhe haſtily, who dares throw any imputation on it?—Lord Farnford knows it was with the utmoſt reluctance that I conſented even to come in his carriage, nothing leſs than Mrs. Stavenell's urging it, and his deceiving me by ſaying his ſiſters would travel with us, would have induced me to accept of ſuch a conveyance, and my aunt little thought to what ſort of a protector ſhe intruſted her niece.

My dear Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid Lord Farnford, what Metward ſays is not very unreaſonable, if you recollect what I have often heard you aſſert againſt me, that not the motives to, but the effects of our actions are ſeen: and it does, I muſt own, ſound rather favourably for me to ſay that

Miſs

Miſs Fitzarthur left London with me, and honoured my houſe by ſleeping in it, and then ſet out again alone with me.—Then, my lord, replied ſhe, if you foreſaw that any diſadvantageous concluſions might be drawn from my conduct, how could you, who profeſs ſo wonderful a regard for me, propoſe my accompanying you? or how could you invite, or rather oblige me to go to your houſe, when you knew it ſubjected me to cenſure?—you will hardly dare to ſay I either aſked to come in your carriage, or to go to your houſe.—My dear madam, ſaid his lordſhip, it is only with ſuch people as I have found it neceſſary to impoſe on, that you could ſuffer; and ſo careful am I of your reputation, that I would not allow even them to entertain a moment's ſuſpicion of you:—will you not excuſe the deceit when it was to ſerve you?—Will that conſideration excuſe it? Conſtance aſked:—but pray, ſaid ſhe, if I am already your wife, why are we detained here?—what ſtory can you have invented that will not make me appear very culpable?—Oh—anſwered he promptly, I told them you had run away with me; that we were privately married: and that I brought you here till your friends were reconciled to us.—Gracious Heaven! exclaimed Miſs Fitzarthur, does this falſhood anſwer the purpoſe for which you ſay it was invented?—Do I not remain in the eyes of the world as guilty as the partial truth would have repreſented me?—you have ſome end of your own to ſerve by it.

Lord

Lord Farnford could not confeſs the true reaſon for aſſerting this falſity, it being undoubtedly fabricated to prevent any of his ſervants from betraying him through pity for the force put on Conſtance: he, to avoid anſwering, immediately changed the diſcourſe to that ſubject in which he well knew all others would be forgotten.—Where is Lord Reycolm? ſaid he to Miſs Fitzarthur.—At Paris, I believe, ſhe replied.—Then it is indifferent, he returned, whether we go to Calais or any other port.—To Calais? ſaid Conſtance, turning round and looking at him, unable to comprehend his meaning.—Have you any choice? he aſked.—Why ſurely, ſhe replied, you do not intend to take me out of the kingdom.—What elſe can I do? ſaid Lord Farnford, you will not be ſafe here.—Why may I not go to my father's? ſhe rejoined.—A prudent ſcheme! ſaid Mr. Metward: Sir Edward Fitzarthur will be quite delighted to receive his ſon-in-law, when her ladyſhip has given what account ſhe pleaſes of her ſtay here.—Do you not ſee, ſaid Lord Farnford to her, the impropriety of my yet meeting any of your friends? If you chuſe to ſay I forced you to marry me, I may expect a proſecution.

This was now intelligible: ſhe could not expect Lord Farnford ſo to expoſe himſelf, but ſtill ſhe urged him to go abroad without her, and to ſuffer her to return to Marſtonbury as ſoon as they were married.—It would certainly be beſt, ſaid

ſhe, to let me return to my father's—when I am your wife you will not be afraid of my deceiving you; and as Sir Edward and my mother muſt now expect me every hour, it will be cruel to keep them in uncertainty of what is become of me.—They will think, anſwered Lord Farnford, that you are ſtill at Mrs. Stavenell's, and depend on it they will hear of us ſoon enough.—They cannot think me at Mrs. Stavenell's, ſaid Conſtance, becauſe the letter I ſent them told them I was on the road.—Oh, I beg your pardon indeed, replied he, ſearching his pockets; I believe I forgot to return your letter; but really I have at preſent ſo many things to think of, it ſlip't my memory; however here it is.—He produced it, ſhe took it out of his hand, and could not forbear exclaiming—O Heaven! my only hope is fled: I have now no reſourſe; they will neither miſs me nor know where to ſeek me.—What, ſaid his lordſhip, you thought I had ſent the letter, and expected, I ſuppoſe, a ſearch for you: I perfectly underſtand your ſcheme, but it will not do indeed, take my word for it. She was now half diſtracted; this was truly her only hope, and ſhe could not bear with any degree of fortitude the ſhock of it's diſappointment: ſhe dropt the letter out of her hand, and was wholly inconſolable; ſhe would not hear what either Lord Farnford or his friend could ſay, but remained in the moſt agonizing grief and deſpair: unable to reſt two moments in a place,

ſhe now ſat down, and immediately roſe and walked haſtily about the room: her cheeks were alternately of the higheſt ſcarlet, and of the moſt deadly paleneſs; and her countenance diſplayed the dreadful commotion of her heart: in this ſituation ſhe was, when Mr. Metward, as if fearing a relaxation of Lord Farnford's firmneſs, drew him out of the room and left her.

The convulſions in her mind were ſoon mitigated by tears; ſhe threw herſelf on a chair and cried bitterly; after thus indulging for ſome minutes, and finding herſelf ſtill alone, the poſſibility of her eſcaping roſe to her imagination; for this purpoſe ſhe ſlipt of her ſhoes, and went trembling towards the door, which ſhe perceived was not locked: at the moment ſhe reached it, it was with all poſſible caution opened on the outſide, and Lord Farnford entered; ſhe did not attempt to conceal her intention, but with her ſhoes in her hand ſtood motionleſs before him: he perceived what ſhe was about to do, and ſhutting the door, ſaid—What, my pretty bird, did you think I had left your cage door open?—I did, ſhe anſwered, and had you not come ſhould have gone down ſtairs.—The very purpoſe, ſaid he, for which I am come to fetch you: dinner is ſending up.—It is impoſſible you ſhould imagine I can eat, ſhe replied, but I am dying with thirſt: ſend me a glaſs of water, for I ſhall not come to dinner.—You muſt not drink water, ſaid Lord Farnford, you have put yourſelf in a fever; come

with

with me, if you do not chuſe to eat, you ſhall not. I cannot leave you here. She was forced to comply, he led her down ſtairs, and along a paſſage to the other ſide of the houſe. At the end of this paſſage was a door, which one of Lord Farnford's ſervants threw open, and it diſcovered a very elegant room: ſuch a contraſt as this was to the apartment ſhe had quitted, made her almoſt doubt if ſhe was awake: the furniture was in the higheſt ſtyle of modern magnificence, the ſideboard was profuſely covered with plate, the attendants were all in Lord Farnford's livery, and ſeemed perfectly at home.

CHAP. IV.

ENDURANCE.

HER powers of recollection ſoon returned and convinced her that ſhe was ſtill in her calamitous ſituation; ſhe was forced to ſit at table with her jailor and Mr. Metward; but ſhe ate nothing, and remained ſilent, till provoked by hearing herſelf ſtyled Lady Farnford, ſhe, in hopes of undeceiving ſome of the ſervants to her advantage, accuſed his lordſhip of his treachery: finding he could not ſtop her, he ordered the table to be clear-

ed, though the dinner was not over, diſmiſſed the attendants, and followed them out of the room.

She was now left with Mr. Metward, to whom ſhe determined not to ſpeak: he, however, did not ſo ſcrupulouſly regard etiquette as to continue ſilent on that account. Upon my word, madam, ſaid he to her, you are very much to blame for indulging in ſuch cauſeleſs grief:—tell me what great hardſhip is there in being obliged to marry a man who makes you ſuch offers: a dreadful thing truly, to be forced to accept a young handſome nobleman, the idol of all the women of faſhion in town, with an eſtate of five and twenty thouſand a year: indeed I wonder my lord takes ſo much pains, for I believe you are almoſt the only lady he ever propoſed marrying; he has ſeldom found that neceſſary; ſo differently do people think! From this abominable impertinence ſhe was relieved by the entrance of Lord Farnford, who now again exerted his rhetoric, and by every expreſſion of fondneſs which could diſguſt her, he tried to coax her; but his efforts were uſeleſs, and ſhe turned from him in ſilence, to a window, from whence acroſs a meadow ſhe had an oblique view of the road: he came and ſtood by her, holding one of her hands in his, and looking very ſteadfaſtly at her.

They had remained about five minutes without ſpeaking, when ſhe ſnatched her hand from him, and throwing up the ſaſh, exclaimed—Gracious God! I am not yet deſerted—how wicked I was

to

to doubt my deliverance!—He imagining ſhe meant to jump out of the window catching hold of her, ſaid—What are you doing?—are you mad? With a countenance illuminated by hope and exultation, while her eyes ſparkled with joy, ſhe replied—Aſk yourſelf, my lord, what you are doing; and whether you have the uſe of your ſenſes; or rather think what apology you can offer, or what ſubterfuge you can invent to appeaſe my father: now, my lord, where is your high ſenſe of honour fled? how will you ſtand his reproaches, or ſhield yourſelf from his rage?—I do not underſtand you, anſwered Lord Farnford: what new trick have you thought of to throw me off my guard?—None, ſhe replied firmly: I am ſure my father is come by this time, I ſaw the coach go by: do not ſtop me, you cannot now detain me.—I muſt not make him wait.—It cannot be ſo, interrupted he: it is impoſſible: I will go and inquire; Metward, do you take care of her, I will be back in a moment: ſo ſaying he ran out of the room.

All Mr. Metward's talents for converſation now forſook him, and he remained ſilent and thoughtful: the ſcene was reverſed; Conſtance tried to awaken in him a ſenſe of his danger, and adviſed him to make his peace with her father by preſenting her to him; but he continued ſullenly ſilent, and appeared ſcarcely conſcious that ſhe was in the room: of this mental lethargy ſhe determined to avail herſelf, and ſpringing to the door had opened

it, when he, ſeizing her arm, ſaid—Not ſo, young lady, this may ſtill be one of your tricks: I chuſe to ſtay and ſee the event.—This diſappointment ſhe conſidered as only the delay of a few minutes, and therefore quietly returned to her place.

Her hopes and expectations became leſs ſanguine when in a few minutes Lord Farnford came in alone, with a ſmile of triumph in his countenance.—Where is my father? ſaid ſhe, haſtily running towards the door: you will not call this one of my ſchemes, for I am certain it was his carriage, and almoſt as ſure that he was in it: you dare not detain me, do you?—Stop, my love, ſaid Lord-Farnford, catching her in his arms, we muſt not part yet.—She was right Metward.—Was ſhe indeed? he aſked.—Yes, replied his lordſhip, with an oath, ſhe was indeed.—She again deſired to know where her father was.—Do not be impatient, ſaid he, you ſhall know preſently: you were not miſtaken; it was Sir Edward; he was paſſing the houſe, and ſtopped his carriage to ſpeak to me.—Well, interrupted Conſtance, and does he not inſiſt on your giving me up?—No, anſwered Lord Farnford, he is not ſo unreaſonable.—My lord, ſaid ſhe, your aſſurance will not ſerve you now; this cannot be true.—I ſwear it is, returned he, and if you will but hear me, I will relate to you the whole of our converſation, in which you were the principal ingredient.—I got to the houſe door juſt as your father was coming by; he ſtopped the coach and I went

went out to ſpeak to him. He aſked me what brought me into the country—I replied, buſineſs. —When did you come?—Yeſterday.—Do you ever ſee my daughter?—Yes, I ſaw her the day I left town.—Are you on tolerable terms?—Very good, we have been friends a great while.—She uſed you very cruelly.—Yes, ſhe has made more hearts than mine ach, but I forgive her, though I muſt ever love her.—She was well, I hope.—Very well.—I am glad of it—how is my ſiſter?—In perfect health.—Does Conſtance ſtay with her till ſhe comes into the country for the ſummer, or is ſhe ſickened of a town life?—I do not think Miſs Fitzarthur has any intention of returning yet to Marſtonbury. —Are you going to town again?—My ſtay here depends on circumſtances.—When you ſee Mrs. Stavenell and my daughter remember me to them. —Certainly; and may I give them the pleaſure of knowing you and Lady Barbara are well?—If the meſſage is not too much trouble: good evening to you; I am going about a quarter of a mile farther, and I fear it will be dark before I get home. Thus, madam, began and ended this intereſting dialogue, from which I had penetration enough to collect that Sir Edward's paſſing this way was accidental, and that if I did not betray myſelf you were perfectly ſafe.

CHAP. V.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS.

NEVER were dejection and diſappointment more ſtrongly delineated than on Miſs Fitzarthur's countenance; her eyes were fixed on Lord Farnford, as if ſhe expected him to contradict what he had ſaid; he led her to a ſeat, and ſhe remained as motionleſs as a ſtatue. All his powers were now exerted to avert the conſequences of this tremendous ſhock, but not a word did ſhe anſwer to all he ſaid. Mr. Metward adviſed leaving her to herſelf, and waiting till the ſtupor which had ſeized her ſhould be diſpelled; but Lord Farnford was too much alarmed to follow his counſel patiently: her breath grew ſhort, her hands were locked in each other, too faſt to yield to any efforts to ſeparate them; her teeth were cloſe ſhut, and ſhe appeared almoſt expiring: her protector and his friend now thought her in the agonies of death, and derived ſmall conſolation from the conviction that they were the authors of it: Lord Farnford rang the bell; and at that inſtant her eyes cloſed, and ſhe fell back in her chair. Some of the ſervants, and people of the houſe came in, and after half an hour's doubt whether ſhe was not irrecoverably

verably gone, ſhe opened her eyes, and reſtored Lord Farnford's hopes: as ſoon as ſhe was out of immediate danger of a relapſe he diſmiſſed the perſons he had called, and ſeating himſelf by her, endeavoured, by encouraging her, to facilitate her recovery. When ſhe was ſufficiently herſelf to recollect her ſituation, ſhe looked fixedly at him, and then at Mr. Metward, who was ſtanding before her, but inſtantly withdrawing her eyes, as if they had met their moſt hated object, ſhe again gazed earneſtly on Lord Farnford, held up her hands in a ſupplicating poſture, and ſhook her head. Though the tears trickled down her cheeks, her countenance was calm; and dignity, humility and reſignation were expreſſed in her looks.

After many efforts to ſpeak, ſhe ſaid, in a voice ſcarcely audible—I have one propoſition to make, which, perhaps, as it is much againſt myſelf, will not be rejected.—I am all attention, replied Lord Farnford, ſpeak on, and be aſſured—Hear her, my lord, interrupted Mr. Metward; it will then be a fitter time for proteſtations.—I cannot ſuppoſe, continued ſhe, after a pauſe, that your inclination led you to exerciſe ſuch force as you have uſed to me: it was a conſciouſneſs that no other means would effect your purpoſe that drove you to theſe violent meaſures: if this is admitted, I cannot doubt that, were you aſſured of the ſucceſs of a leſs compulſive plan, you would be willing to adopt it.—Certainly, anſwered his lordſhip, provided I

were ſure of the ſame ſucceſs. Then hear, ſaid Conſtance, what I now offer: if you will generouſly allow me to return immediately to Marſtonbury, free as I entered this houſe—Aſtoniſhing, interrupted Mr. Metward: why, madam, do you think my lord mad? or have you loſt your ſenſes?—Silence, ſaid Lord Farnford, ſhe ſhall be hear'd: make your propoſition, Miſs Fitzarthur, and it ſhall be attended to.—I ſay then, reſumed Conſtance, that on this condition, I promiſe, as far as I can bind myſelf, to conſent to what you inſiſt on: you ſhall be allowed to ſee me; I will not in any way, excepting my wiſhes, oppoſe you; and if you can obtain my father's conſent again I muſt be yours.—Lord Farnford roſe haſtily, and withdrew with his adviſer to the other end of the room; from whence returning after a few minutes conſultation, he told her that he muſt be mad if he acquieſced in what ſhe had propoſed, that he was ſorry to refuſe her, but that the riſque was too great for him to venture.

Conſtance had not flattered herſelf with the ſucceſs of her project, yet the attempt was worth making: on receiving this arbitrary refuſal ſhe only replied:—Since you are determined to give up nothing I ſhall make no more propoſitions.—If they are all like this, anſwered Mr. Metward, I believe they are as well ſuppreſſed—I hope, ſaid Lord Farnford, you will not give the odious name of obſtinacy to my neceſſary ſteadineſs; believe me, it is with reluctance

reluctance I refuse you any thing.—Our interests are so opposite, returned she, that we can agree in nothing; but, my lord, I desire I may know what is required of me: you do not mean, I hope, to make this house the scene of your marriage: I beg you will chuse some place a little more sacred than this horrid house.—To be sure, said Mr. Metward, with a sneer, my lord means to be married in Marstonbury church, and if it would not take too long a time, he would, for the form's sake, have the banns published: nothing would then be wanting but to invite Sir Edward Fitzarthur's family to be present, and the chances for his securing his wife would be about as good as if he was married any where out of this house.—My request, said she, cannot be thought unreasonable: my consenting to marry Lord Farnford surely entitles me to chuse where I will be married.—Certainly, madam, replied Mr. Metward, you would be wanting to yourself if you did not try to prevail on my lord; for his compliance would give you a fine opportunity of saying *I will not*, instead of *I will*.—You are very cruel said Lord Farnford to Constance, to oblige me so often to thwart you: you make requests which you know I cannot grant, and then call me unkind for refusing you: that this house should be the scene of our wedding is a resolution from which I can, on no consideration depart—this house, this room of it shall be made sacred by our union; superstition has annexed particular ideas

to particular places: but that place cannot need any additional circumſtances to entitle it to reverence where Farnford vows eternal love, fidelity, and gratitude to his adored Conſtance, and ſhe in return gives him a hand, he yet flatters himſelf, inſeparable from her heart.—It is impoſſible, ſhe replied, that you can have any objection to the ſervice being read in church: I give you my word I will not oppoſe it, and when I ſay this why will you not gratify me?—I cannot, returned his lordſhip, it would furniſh converſation for the country, and you would ſoon be known: you muſt give up this point, Miſs Fitzarthur, prudence will not allow me to indulge my inclination to oblige you.

Finding that all entreaty would be thrown away on the ſubject, ſhe aſked who were to be preſent. Lord Farnford and his friend looked at each other, and ſeemed at a loſs, till Mr. Metward's never failing promptitude ſuggeſted an evaſion:—I dare ſay, madam, he replied, if you deſire it, my lord will let the woman of the houſe attend you.—What then, interrupted Conſtance, do you intend to have no witneſſes of our marriage; this I proteſt I will not ſubmit to. Lord Farnford ſhall not be at liberty when I am bound: if I am to be his wife I will be ſo effectually; and without he ſuffers the ſervice to be read with the uſual ceremony, I will die rather than conſent to marry him: after all I can do, it will be, I believe, an illegal marriage. I know nothing of what is requiſite to render it valid, but

but I inſiſt on having witneſſes, or I hold myſelf diſcharged from my promiſe.—My love, ſaid Lord Farnford, you ſhall be ſatisfied: the ceremony ſhall be performed with the ſame formality as if you were at home. I have a friend in the neighbourhood whom I can aſk to give you away, and any or all of the family here ſhall be preſent: what can you fear? it is impoſſible you can ſuppoſe I would deceive you now; your wiſhes and mine are exactly the ſame.

His lordſhip having acceded to one requeſt thought himſelf entitled by it to aſk a return, and he therefore confidently propoſed to Miſs Fitzarthur that the ſervice ſhould be read as ſoon as poſſible. This which was at leaſt an infringement of his promiſe to allow her till the next day, ſhe ſteadily refuſed: but he was not to be diſcouraged; he repreſented to her the uſeleſſneſs of poſtponing it, which could only prolong the time of her confinement, when ſhe had no proſpect of advantage from it.—Tell me, ſaid he, candidly, whether you can perceive the leaſt benefit from this delay? if you ſtill entertain expectations of eſcaping me, I will not urge you. It was true ſhe could foreſee no advantage; yet, as to conſent would be to preclude even poſſibility, ſhe continued firmly to oppoſe it. But Lord Farnford, who well knew what would work on her, deſired her to conſider how ſhe could bear all the ill-natured reflections that might be caſt on her remaining ſo long with him; and aided by Mr Metward, he to

dreſſed

dreſſed up a ſcarecrow of calumny and ſcandal, intimating how good a ſtory it would make for the London news-papers, and profeſſing himſelf not at all ſecure of the ſecrecy of his people, that love of reputation and dread of reproach overcame every other objection, and though ſhe did not conſent, ſhe ceaſed to oppoſe.

Lord Farnford immediately ſent a ſervant to a Mr. Weſter, the perſon deſtined to the office of diſpoſing of Conſtance, and who lived within a mile deſiring to ſpeak with him. He was a man of conſiderable property in the county: his chief recommendation an unremitted and enthuſiaſtic paſſion for field ſports: he was now upwards of fifty years of age, and had in his youth been, what is termed *a gay man*: he had a radical hatred to matrimony, and never was ſo eloquent as in declaiming againſt it; but being, nevertheleſs, an admirer of *female excellence*, he had generally honoured ſome one or other of the neighbouring dairy maids or farmer's daughters with his regard. From this gentleman Lord Farnford knew he had nothing to fear; he was a ſtranger to Miſs Fitzarthur, and was under obligations to his employer, however Conſtance might behave, there was no reaſon to apprehend the weakneſs of commiſeration from Mr. Weſter, and he could very eaſily, before he was introduced, ſo warn him of her reluctance, as to prevent his ſurprize and ſecure his acquieſcence.

As ſoon as the meſſenger was diſpatched, Lord Farnford

Farnford told his captive that he did not wiſh to confine her to the houſe: if a walk about the ground was agreeable to her, he would accompany her; or, if ſhe choſe being alone, he would only ſhow her the way out; ſhe had little inclination to ſtir, and leſs curioſity to gratify, but he preſſed it, and ſhe went out by herſelf: ſhe ſtrolled through the meadow into a garden behind the houſe, where there were ſome children at play; ſhe ſtopped to look at them, and to indulge a ſecret wiſh that ſhe could change ſituations with them; they were pleaſed by her taking notice of them, and came running round her, when a young woman entered the garden and bid them return to the houſe, and not trouble the lady.—Conſtance deſired they might not be called in on her account, for that ſhe loved children.—Yes, ma'am, anſwered the young woman, I dare ſay you do; but they are very troubleſome when one be'ſn't well, and your ladyſhip looks very poorly.—I am not well, Miſs Fitzarthur replied, and yet I could almoſt wiſh I was worſe.—'Tis a ſad thing to be low ſpirited, returned the young woman, and for ſuch a lady as you be, it's bad indeed. I uſed to think how none but us poor people had any thing to make 'em ſad, but I ſees rich folks has as many cares and fears as we.—They have truly, and many more, ſaid Conſtance, who was pleaſed with her companion's appearance; no body can more truly witneſs it than myſelf, for though you may think

that if I am not one of the happieſt creatures in the world, it is my own fault, I cannot conceive it poſſible to be more miſerable: if it would pleaſe God to take me out of the way of ſuch misfortunes! The young woman ſurveyed Miſs Fitzarthur attentively, the tears ſtarted in her eyes, and ſhe was juſt going to expreſs her ſympathetic ſorrow, when the woman of the houſe called her in and took her place.

This exchange was not for Conſtance's advantage: the woman was very much inclined to talk, and without the leaſt encouragement became extremely eloquent in the praiſes of Lord Farnford: at laſt, finding Miſs Fitzarthur made no reply, ſhe told her ſhe thought ſhe did very wrong to make herſelf ſo unhappy for nothing.—If I did ſo, ſaid Conſtance, I ſhould be very wrong; but I believe we all think ourſelves the beſt judges of our own happineſs or miſery, and in my opinion I have ſufficient cauſe for being unhappy.—Aye, ſo you thinks now, replied the woman, but I dare to ſay in a fortnight's time you'll be as blythe as a bird, and think yourſelf as happy as ever you was in all the days of your life:—why I remember the lady my lord brought down here laſt ſummer, for the firſt week after ſhe come ſhe talked juſt as you do now, but lord bleſs me! after that you'd ha' been ſurprized to ſee how ſhe altered: ſhe grew ſo merry and ſo good-humoured, and indeed how ſhould ſhe be otherwiſe, for my lord was ſo kind to her, I do

believe

believe if ſhe could have ate gold ſhe might ha' had it.—What lady, interrupted Miſs Fitzarthur, are you talking of?—I know of no lady.—Dear ma'am, replied the woman, did you never hear my lord talk of her?---ſhe was the ſweeteſt creature, and ſo good-natured!--Was ſhe a relation of his? Miſs Fitzarthur aſked:—I ſuppoſe it was one of his ſiſters.—No, ma'am ſaid her intelligencer, the ſervants ſaid as tho' ſhe looked ſo like a lady, ſhe was but ſome tradeſman's daughter in London; but I'm ſure, you'd ha' thought her a ducheſs:—for a great while before ſhe came we had ſuch a to-do here:—why 'twas for her as my lord built they grand rooms—I'm ſure as I've reaſon to bleſs the hour ſhe come, for it's been, as you may ſay, the making of me, and I'm bound to pray for my lord as long as I live, and ſo's my children.—I'd go through fire and water to ſerve him, and ſo we ought all of us, for we ſhall never ha' ſuch another good friend.—And pray ſaid Conſtance, what is become of this lady?—Oh, replied the loquacious dame, my lord and ſhe had a bit of a quarrel, and ſo ſhe went away back to London:—indeed I muſt ſay ſhe was in fault, for ſhe lived, as you may ſay, like a princeſs here, and 'twas very fooliſh to go for to quarrel at laſt about nothing, or next to nothing:—I believe ſhe was jealous of my lord, juſt as if his great fortune be'n't enough for ten ſuch as ſhe:—'twas very fooliſh to be ſo nice.—Why now, to ſee the difference of people, there was that lady as

my

my lord brought here after her, ſhe never minded if ſhe didn't ſee him for a week, and when he was gone ſhe uſed to have her company, and was as merry as the day's long; and then if my lord ſaid any thing to her in the way of talk as ſhe didn't like, ſhe'd laugh, and be ſo good-humoured he coudn't be angry:—ſuch ſpirits I never ſee.—Gracious Heaven! whiſpered Conſtance, what a proſpect have I before me!—What makes you ſigh, ma'am, ſaid the woman.--I ſigh, ſhe replied, to think what a wicked young man Lord Farnford is; ſurely that woman who is deſtined to be his wife has ample cauſe to ſigh,---Why I don't know, rejoined the woman; to be ſure my lord's a little wild, that's for certain, but by what I hear, ſo's all young gentlemen that ha' got ſuch a great deal of money, and I'm ſure my lord lives like a prince:—he never grudges his money.—Would it not be much better ſpent, ſaid Conſtance, in doing good, than of bringing ſuch ladies as you talk of into the country?—Why that does good, anſwered his lordſhip's champion, for when as he came to be, as you may ſay, his own maſter, he telled me as how if I would let him come, and be at my houſe when he chuſed it, and bring his friends and acquaintances, I ſhould live o'the farm and pay no rent, and we paid forty pound a year till then, and much ado ſometimes to raiſe money by quarter-day.

By her ill-judged communication it was eaſy to diſcover

diſcover, that Lord Farnford's tenant had not more than her portion of common ſenſe, by the latter part of it that ſhe was not in affluent circumſtances, and by her obſequious devotion to her landlord that ſhe was mercenary.—A gleam of hope now darted acroſs Miſs Fitzarthur's mind, that a handſome bribe would prevail on her to betray her truſt, ſhe therefore to ſound her, took ſome looſe money out of her pocket, and counting it, put it into her purſe: the woman eyed her while ſhe was thus employed, and at laſt obſerved that ſhe had a vaſt deal of money,—More than I want, thank God, ſaid Conſtance, but this is not much, I have ten times more in my pocket-book.—Aye, it's a fine thing to be rich, replied the woman, when folks has the heart to do good with their money, but ſome are ſo niggardly they does'nt care who wants.—I hope ſaid Miſs Fitzarthur, that is not my diſpoſition.—No, I dare ſay not, the woman anſwered, I didn't mean to ſay as you was ſo, but there's a great many about us as would rather ſee a poor widow and her children ſtarve than do any thing for 'em; I'm ſure I find it my caſe;—and I'm ſure it's not like me, for I often thinks with myſelf if it wasn't for my children I'd give away all that I had, for it makes my heart ach to ſee many poor creatures how they be diſtreſſed.—I will put you in a way to do good to a perſon in great diſtreſs, replied Conſtance, hoping her ſcheme would now ſucceed; and you and your family ſhall be the better for it.—

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The woman ſtared, and Conſtance continued;—In money and jewels I have about me near two hundred pounds;—releaſe me from this confinement and it is your's; only open that gate to the road, and prevent Lord Farnford's following me, and I will never tell who did this friendly act for me:—I will reward you on my return home, and pray for you as my beſt friend,—Why, I don't know, replied the woman—how much is—let me ſee—ſeven times forty—why it's two hundred and eighty—a'n't it?—No, ma'am, I can't be ſo wicked:—my lord ſaid as how you'd try to bribe me, and if I took it, he'd turn me out he ſwore, and make me pay rears, and that would be for ſeven year, and I can't do it.—I will make up any loſs of that kind afterwards, ſaid Conſtance; let me entreat you:---you do not know what an act of charity it would be; you would thrive the better for it as long as you live.---I can't indeed, ma'am, returned Lord Farnford's tenant ſtifly, for my lord has promiſed me when he's married he'll give me a bit more land, and I don't know how much twou'd be out of my way to do it, and I ſhould be robbing my poor children; but here's my lord a coming:—I'm ſure I woudn't wrong ſuch a gentleman for all the world's worth and more too.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

SELF-CONSIDERATION.

IT was ſo nearly duſk that Miſs Fitzarthur had not perceived Lord Farnford come into the garden: he approached her haſtily, and renewed every painful idea in her mind: from what ſhe had juſt learnt, her abhorrence of him was conſiderably increaſed, and ſhe turned involuntarily from him; but he ſeizing her reluctant hand, ſaid,—Now, my love, let me lead you to the houſe: Mr. Weſter is come, and we wait for you.—She had no alternative: he ſupported her, and led her by a ſhorter way to the room they had left. Here ſhe ſaw Mr. Metward dreſt in his ſurplice, and Mr. Weſter who advanced to meet her:—A death-like chill ſpread over her whole frame; her knees trembled, and ſhe was forced to ſit down. Lord Farnford grew impatient, but ſhe paid no attention to his urgency: the image of Lord Calorne now roſe to her imagination,---the promiſe they had exchanged,—his words, *you are mine, you cannot give yourſelf to another*, again ſounded in her ears, and ſhe ſhuddered at the engagement ſhe was about to enter into.—Would you have any body elſe with you, Lord Farnford aſked: ſhe could anſwer only by an affirmative.

affirmative.—Who ſaid he, as he rang the bell, ſhall the woman of the houſe come?—The young woman, anſwered Conſtance, in a ſcarcely articulate voice.—Let her aunt then, ſaid Mr. Metward, come with her, or ſhe will do miſchief. The two females were ſent for, and as ſoon as they came, Lord Farnford took Conſtance's hand to lead her to the upper end of the room.—Now, ſaid he, in a whiſper, you muſt exert yourſelf:---do not be alarmed, I beg. She deſired to be allowed a few minutes, ſaying ſhe could not yet command her ſpirits; he left her and talked aſide to Mr. Weſter, till perceiving that her agitation inſtead of leſſening increaſed, he returned to her, and endeavoured to encourage her.

Conſider, Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid he, at one time or other you muſt be in this ſituation; and I think I may venture to ſay it was not a part of your ſcheme of life to avoid it.—Under circumſtances of tyranny and compulſion, replied Conſtance, I ever hoped to avoid it. Theſe words, and the manner in which they were pronounced excited Mr. Weſter's curioſity.—You told me, ſaid he to Lord Farnford, that the lady was ſhy; this is the queereſt ſort of ſhyneſs that I ever ſaw.

A little recovering at the ſound of a voice that had not yet declared againſt her, ſhe anſwered,---O Sir, you perhaps know not the cauſe I have for what you call ſhyneſs.---Stop her cried Mr. Metward to Lord Farnford, who immediately ſeizing her

her hands would have forced her to riſe, had not Mr. Weſter interfering diſengaged her.—No violence ſaid he, before I give this lady away I will be ſatisfied ſhe approves of my ſo doing. Mr. Metward now drawing Mr. Weſter from her, ſaid to him:—What are you doing? Sir: I aſſure you it is nothing more than the exceſs of affectation; ſhe wants to have it believed that ſhe is forced to this marriage, that ſhe may avoid the reſentment of her friends.—'Tis impoſſible, replied Mr. Weſter, I will know what is the cauſe of her reluctance, for I will not be drawn into a ſcrape for Lord Farnford or any body.

Such unexpected oppoſition and firmneſs irritated Mr. Metward; he threw the book which he had in his hand againſt the wainſcot, and bounced out of the room: all was now a ſcene of confuſion; Conſtance could with difficulty be kept from fainting, and high words enſued between Lord Farnford and Mr. Weſter, who reſenting what he believed a ſcheme to involve him in trouble, and regarding his own ſecurity, without paying the ſmalleſt attention to the ſituation of Miſs Fitzarthur, left the houſe furiouſly ſwearing at Lord Farnford.

During the whole of this buſtle, Conſtance had been tortured between hope and fear, the two women were very officious, but the concern of the niece almoſt incapacitated her from affording her any aſſiſtance. When Mr. Weſter peremptorily refuſed

refuſed the implicit obedience required, her hopes were ſanguine; but when ſhe ſaw that he was intereſted only for himſelf, all expectations of deliverance vaniſhed: had he conſcientiouſly refuſed to perform this office, he would not have left her in ſuch a ſtate of danger; but ſelf preſervation was the motive from which he acted, and when he quitted the houſe ſhe was, as having excited Lord Farnford's reſentment, in a worſe ſituation than before: ſhe ſaw his anger riſe, he walked up and down the room in violent perturbation; then diſmiſſing the women and coming to her, he ſaid in a tone of ſettled rage:—Madam you have ruined me; greater danger however awaits my renouncing you than can follow from my perſeverance; I have indulged your capricious requeſts, and you have rewarded me for it; by heaven you ſhall reap no advantage from your obſtinacy; I ſee nothing leſs than compulſion will do, and you ſhall feel it; you drive me to it; you ſhall not have a quarter of an hour longer to exerciſe your invention; the ſervice ſhall be inſtantly read, and in what way I chuſe; for all kindneſs is thrown away on you. He turned from her abruptly, and ringing the bell violently, told the footman who anſwered it to ſend Mr, Metward in; he obeyed the ſummons, but Lord Farnford was obliged to ſubmit to a delay which his fiery temper could ill-brook, for his fury had thrown Miſs Fitzarthur into ſtrong hyſterics.

All

All efforts to reſtore her to calmneſs were for an hour and an half ineffectual, and Lord Farnford was compelled by his fears for her, to promiſe that no force ſhould be put on her; this aſſurance did more towards her recovery than any other means uſed, and as ſoon as ſhe could ſpeak, availing herſelf of his favourable diſpoſition, ſhe made him repeat his promiſe, and in return gave him her word, that if it pleaſed God to leave her ſo long in his power as till the expiration of the time firſt named, on condition ſhe was ſuffered to remain till then in peace, ſhe would make no farther reſiſtance. Notwithſtanding the frowns and viſible marks of diſapprobation by which Mr. Metward expreſſed his ſentiments, Lord Farnford yielded to her requeſt, and when his abettor ſtrongly remonſtrated againſt it, he anſwered him by ſaying, that, though, he believed it imprudent, he could do no otherwiſe, that her conſent was worth waiting for, and that he could not put her to ſuch a trial.

The remainder of the evening paſſed in a ſullen gloom, Lord Farnford was not pleaſed at the neceſſity he had ſubmitted to; Mr. Metward was diſappointed, and Conſtance was half dead; at eleven o'clock they adviſed her retiring, but exhauſted as ſhe was, ſhe could not think of reſt in ſuch a houſe and with ſuch people: his lordſhip plainly diſcerning who was the occaſion of her rejecting, what in her ſituation muſt be a welcome propoſition, on his honour aſſured her ſhe

might be perfectly eaſy, for that till ſhe rang her bell in the morning, no one ſhould be ſuffered to come near her room.—It is true, ſaid he, I ſhall faſten you into your chamber; but you may alſo lock me out; therefore I beg you will endeavour to reſt, that your ſpirits may be recruited by to-morrow.

She then conſidering, that ſhe ſhould be equally ſafe and leſs reſtrained if ſhe were alone, roſe to go: her aſſiduous lover went out to order the woman of the houſe to light her to her room, and returning in a few minutes opened a door which led to the ſtair-caſe: her attendant was waiting for her, and following her to her apartment; ſhe deſired if ſhe wanted any thing ſhe would ring, and then left her: Conſtance immediately bolted herſelf in, and almoſt as ſoon as ſhe had done ſo, ſhe heard ſomebody come up the ſtairs and faſten the door on the outſide: the room ſhe come into firſt was furniſhed elegantly with every thing neceſſary for a dreſſing-room, through this was her chamber, which was fitted up in a correſpondent ſtyle; and here ſitting down, ſhe freely gave way to the grief that overwhelmed her: ſhe could not prevail on herſelf to go to bed, yet aware that ſome repoſe was abſolutely needful to the renewal of her ſtrength, ſhe determined to lie down in her clothes: for this purpoſe, ſhe had juſt taken off her hat, when ſhe was ſtartled by hearing people talking under the window; ſhe did not dare to look out; but liſtening

ſhe

ſhe heard a woman's voice ſay :—O fie, Thomas ; what a ſhame you ſhould be more afeard nor I!— a little after ſhe heard a man anſwer ;—You know Suſan, as I'd lay down my life to ſerve you :— I ben't afeard for myſelf, I'ſe afeard for you.— Ne'er mind me, returned the woman, briſkly :— I'll take care of myſelf. They walked on, Conſtance could diſtinguiſh no more, and was going to lie down, when ſhe was again alarmed by ſomething beating againſt the window : the noiſe continued ſo long, that ſhe gained courage to open the ſaſh, and inſtantly a little white ball was thrown acroſs her into the middle of the room ; ſhe took it up, and finding it a large pebble ſtone wrapped in in paper, ſhe ſuppoſed it to have been thrown without an intention of reaching her room, and was going to return it whence it came when ſhe perceived the paper was written on ; ſhe pulled down the window, took the paper to the candle, and with ſome difficulty decyphered the following words, which were rendered obſcure by a ſcarcely legible hand, and enveloped in ſtill worſe orthography.

'Dear Lady,

'Pray do not be afraid : open this window at 'three. Come along with him and do as he ſays ; 'and pray don't be afraid.'

Here was now a hope of liberation, yet ſhe did not dare to give way to the joy it occaſioned : it might be ſome artifice of Lord Farnford's to carry her farther ; but, as ſhe was already as much in his

power as ſhe could any where be, ſhe reſolved to do as ſhe was directed, and truſt to providence for the event. With ſentiments of the ſincereſt gratitude to heaven for this proſpect of deliverance ſhe now ventured to lie down; hoping that, if ſhe could ſleep, ſhe might be able to carry into execution any ſcheme that was projected for her releaſe; but ſhe was too much agitated to reſt, and, above all, the fear of miſſing the appointed hour deterred her from endeavouring to forget the difficulties and dangers of her ſituation. At laſt, the village clock ſtruck three, and with all poſſible caution ſhe opened the window; the moon ſhone, and ſhe ſaw a man ſtanding cloſe under the wall, who on hearing her raiſed a ſtep ladder which he aſcended till he came even with her; ſhe trembled all over, when the man, in the moſt encouraging tone of voice, ſaid:—Don't frighten yourſelf my lady; I wou'dn't do you no harm for all the world; can you come down? if you can, you're ſafe; for Suſan bid me tell you my lord ſleeps o't'other ſide the houſe. Theſe words cheered her, and ſtepping on a chair ſhe was juſt on the ladder, when the man ſaid:—You ſhake ſadly, my lady; if you ſhou'd fall I ſhou'd never forgive myſelf; let me take you down. He then took her in his arms, and ſet her ſafely on the ground.—Thank God, ſaid ſhe, I am out of the houſe; what am I to do now?—Come with me, your ladyſhip, anſwered

ſwered her conductor; but if you pleaſe don't ſpeak, becauſe we muſt go under my lord's window.

They croſſed the garden behind the houſe, and came to a little gate leading into the orchard, which was locked; this difficulty was however provided againſt, by ſome logs of wood which were laid ſo as to anſwer the purpoſe of a ſtile.—Now, my lady, ſaid the man, as ſoon as ſhe was over, you may talk if you pleaſe; and I'll tell you what I'm to do with you; for we are quite ſafe, nobody will be up this hour, to be ſure; and Suſan ſays you won't be miſſed a great while.—Then pray, ſaid Conſtance, let me know to whom I am ſo much obliged; who has been ſo humane as to take ſo much trouble for me?—No trouble at all, replied the man; Suſan ſchemed it all: I only did as ſhe bid me, for I'd not ha' known nothing about it hadn't been for her.—And who is Suſan, Miſs Fitzarthur aſked: is it the young woman I ſaw in the garden in the afternoon?—Yes, my lady, he anſwered, ſhe ſays, how you ſtood and talked a good bit of while to her, and it's almoſt broke her heart, for ſhe's very tender-hearted. By aſking a few more queſtions Conſtance learnt that Suſan, who was the niece of Lord Farnford's tenant, had employed this man, her lover, to carry into execution the plan ſhe had contrived; that he was to conduct her to his mother's, which was at a ſmall diſtance from the houſe ſhe was before in; that ſhe was either to remain there till later in the

morning, and then to go to Marſtonbury, or to ſet off as ſoon as a poſt-chaiſe could be procured from the town: as it was to be determined by her own choice ſhe would have gone home without any delay, but as this muſt have carried her to her father's at an hour that would alarm the family, ſhe conſented to wait, and her guide engaged to have a chaiſe ready at ſeven o'clock.

They ſoon arrived at Thomas's mothers, and Conſtance was very kindly received by her: after ſuch exertions, as had been made for her ſhe could not doubt her ſafety in that houſe, and therefore, though with ſmall inclination, ſhe yielded to the old woman's intreaties that ſhe would at leaſt lie down; ſhe went to a very neat homely chamber, and if ſhe did not ſleep ſoundly, dozed in ſecurity, and was refreſhed by it. At half paſt ſix, her hoſteſs came to the door; ſhe immediately obeyed her call, and found a breakfaſt provided for her, of which, that ſhe might not appear ungrateful, ſhe eat a little: the chaiſe came punctually, and after having given the contents of her purſe to Thomas and his mother, with a Bank note for Suſan, and deſired that both for their ſakes and her own the affair might never be mentioned; with expreſſions of gratitude and obligation ſhe ſet out on her return to Marſtonbury.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

GRIEF.

ALL remembrance of her paſt ſufferings was now obliterated in the joy of ſeeing herſelf once more ſafe, and in the road to her father's: an hour and half brought her within ſight of the houſe, and all her endeavours to collect her ſpirits were ineffectual: tears of gladneſs now relieved her as thoſe of ſorrow had many times in the preceding day; and her delight when ſhe was incloſed within the park gates, is only be conceived by by ſuch as have like her ſuffered.

Aſtoniſhment was painted on the faces of the people at the lodge, and the ſervants ſhe met ſeemed ſcarcely to believe the information of their eyes; nor, when on getting out of the chaiſe ſhe aſked where Sir Edward and her mother were, could ſhe get an anſwer: at laſt the houſekeeper, who had caught a glimpſe of her, running out exclaimed: Good Lord! my dear young lady, is it you? I am glad you're come; but you can't have heard: we none of us knew of your coming.—I ſuppoſe not, replied Conſtance; pray diſcharge the chaiſe; give the man a guinea, for I have no money, and tell

tell me where my father and mother are.—My lady is with Sir Edward, the houſe-keeper anſwered.—I had better tell her that you're come: ſhe longed to ſee you, but ſhe cou'd not expect you ſo ſoon.—Conſtance went into a parlor, and in an undiſcribable tremor of joy, perturbation, and impatience, waited to ſee her mother.

Lady Barbara ſoon came in, but what was her daughter's ſurpriſe when ſhe perceived that her countenance, inſtead of indicating pleaſure at her return, was overſpread with melancholy; ſhe appeared pale, languid, and dejected; and when Conſtance threw herſelf on her neck and burſt into tears, Lady Barbara ſeemed deprived of the power of ſpeech. Recovering, ſhe ſaid:—My dear love, how is it poſſible you are come ſo ſoon? we ſent for you—have you heard of it?—No, anſwered Conſtance, I came ſuddenly; Lord Farnford's family brought me: what is the matter, my dear mother: I am ſure it muſt be ſomething very terrible, you look ſo ill.—There is an expreſs, ſaid her mother, gone to town for you—your father is very bad—I rejoice that you are come, though I do not think he will know you. The grief and terror this news occaſioned made Conſtance forget every thing elſe: ſhe begged to ſee Sir Edward, and, ſcarcely able to ſupport herſelf, ſhe went with her mother to his bed-ſide: he was unconſcious of her being there: a paralytic ſtroke had, immediately on his

his return home the evening before, deprived him of the uſe of his faculties.

Though Lady Barbara received comfort from her daughter's unexpected arrival, the ſituation of Conſtance was ſuch as to increaſe her trouble: What ſhe had undergone in the laſt twenty-four hours, with the addition of this affliction, ſo entirely overpowered her that till the afternoon ſhe was very little better than her father: this was naturally attributed to ſurpriſe and concern on his account: when ſhe grew more compoſed Lady Barbara informed her of the circumſtances of his illneſs, and anſwered her enquiry, whether he was thought in danger, by ſaying, his recovery was yet doubtful. Towards the evening he became ſenſible, and this opportunity was ſeized to tell him of his daughter's arrival; he deſired to ſee her, knew her, and ſuppoſing her coming to be in conſequence of her having been ſent for, told her, inarticulately, that ſhe was very good to come ſo ſoon, and that ſhe was come to ſee him die, for that he ſhould never recover.—Tears were the only anſwer ſhe could make, and her mother was obliged to take her away leſt ſhe ſhould diſturb Sir Edward. Lady Barbara ſat up with him, as ſhe had done the night before, and inſiſted on her daughter's going to bed, who was too much exhauſted to follow her inclination, to have ſhared her fatigue.

The unremitted care and ſolicitude which this calamity occaſioned had ſo far been favourable

to Conſtance as to ſpare her the pain of relating events yet too recent to be thought on with compoſure, and to Lady Barbara, as ſhe avoided hearing what muſt have increaſed diſtreſs already as much as ſhe could ſupport; her curioſity was ſuſpended; ſhe was ſo well pleaſed to have her daughter with her when her preſence was ſo neceſſary, that ſhe made no inquiry into the cauſe of her coming, nor did thoſe circumſtances reſpecting her which, at any other time would have alarmed her maternal care, now excite the leaſt wiſh to have them explained.

The next day, Sir Edward gave no greater hopes of his life; he was, for a few minutes together ſenſible; but preſently ſunk into a lethargy which made thoſe about him often doubt his being alive: his phyſician ſaid that ſome days muſt elapſe before it would be poſſible to decide on his caſe; and Conſtance flattered herſelf that at every lucid interval he gained recollection. While ſhe was ſitting with her mother at breakfaſt, a letter was brought to her; ſhe hardly dared take it, fearing its contents, till enquiring whence it came, the ſervant told her it was brought with Lady Maria Peryton's compliments, by one of Lord Farnford's men, who had left her trunk. She had not ſufficient command over herſelf to be certain ſhe could read this letter without an alteration in her countenance, and ſhe dreaded alarming her mother: ſhe therefore, would have deferred looking at it till ſhe was alone, and

was

was putting it in her pocket, unconſcious that in the very act ſhe betrayed herſelf, when Lady Barbara who watched her, aſked her why ſhe did not open it.—Conſtance drew it out again, and was ſilent and diſtreſſed.—My dear, ſaid her mother, there is ſomething you wiſh to conceal:—you alarm me, why do you change colour? what can you have to fear from me?—I fear nothing, replied Conſtance, except giving you pain: you ſhould ſee Lady Maria's letter, if I could render what it may perhaps allude to, intelligible to you without making you uneaſy.—I have not been able, ſaid Lady Barbara, to pay much attention to you: I am afraid ſomething has happened more than I can gueſs at; whatever it is, I ſhall be more eaſy to know it than to be kept in ſuſpenſe: if you wiſh to relieve me, do not ſuffer my curioſity to make conjectures: it is ſomething reſpecting Mrs. Stavenell, and that is the reaſon you came home ſo ſuddenly.—Conſtance aſſured her it was not, and gave as a cauſe of her haſty return the declining ſtate of her health, and the opportunity of coming with Lord Farnford's family.

It was become impoſſible to conceal the particulars of her journey, and ſhe therefore, prefacing what ſhe had to ſay ſo as to ſoften its effects, and frequently repeating that all danger was over, diſcloſed the events of the two preceding days: Lady Barbara heard her with terror and aſtoniſhment, juſtly blaming Mrs. Stavenell for committing her to

Lord

Lord Farnford's care. Though the part ſhe had in this affair was not clear, Conſtance acquitted her of every thing excepting imprudence, in having ſo manifeſted her partiality for her favourite, as to take from him all fear of incurring her diſpleaſure: the journey to Marſtonbury was ſo ſuddenly reſolved on, and his knowing her intention ſo accidental, that ſhe could not think Mrs. Stavenell, however her general conduct warranted the ſuſpicion, at all concerned in or privy to this outrage: ſhe therefore endeavoured, by ſtating clearly the circumſtances preceding her quitting London, and repreſenting the almoſt impoſſibility of any ſcheme having been concerted with her, in this inſtance to exculpate her, which ſhe could not do from having uniformly encouraged Lord Farnford in all others. Miſs Fitzarthur then read to her mother Lady Maria's letter, which informed her, that his lordſhip had fled to his ſeat in the north, to avoid the reſentment he expected, and contained the moſt ſatisfactory aſſurance of her diſapprobation of the part he had acted, and her exculpation from any knowledge of his intention when they left London: ſhe concluded by expreſſing her ſorrow for what had happened, and by ſaying, that ſhe would not re-commence her intimacy with MiſsFitzarthur while it was poſſible that her brother ſhould avail himſelf of it.

The renunciation of her intercourſe with Lady Maria Peryton was a heavy price to pay for a ſecurity others naturally enjoyed, and ſhe hoped it needed

needed not be ſo total as entirely to cut off all communication between them: they might keep up a correſpondence without meeting, and conſequently without danger; but this Lady Barbara prohibited: ſhe convinced her daughter that ſhe could not, after what had happened, be too cautious; that Lady Maria muſt either forget that Lord Farnford was her brother, or that Conſtance was her friend: that ſhe might be drawn into innumerable difficulties by renewing an acquaintance which ſhe was ſure their reciprocal affection would not long ſuffer to be confined to letters; and that, as ſhe might reſt aſſured of Lady Maria's putting the right conſtruction on her acquieſcence, and ſtill retaining her regard for her, a relaxation would be imprudent, while any thing was to be feared from Lord Farnford.

Every time Lady Barbara ſpoke, Conſtance trembled leſt enquiry ſhould be made after Lord Calorne; ſhe was unwilling to increaſe her mother's afflictions by diſcloſing her own, and ſhe well knew that ſhe could not relate the circumſtances of his conduct, without diſcovering that it had ruined her peace. Occupied as Lady Barbara's mind was, ſhe flattered herſelf, he would not be thought on; but this hope did not long laſt: after the converſation reſpecting Lord Farnford, ſhe aſked if Lord Calorne meant to accept Sir Edward's invitation of following her: Conſtance turned away from her to the window, and confuſedly anſwered

that

that her return was too ſuddenly reſolved on for any body who was not immediately concerned in it to be informed of it. Fortunately Lady Barbara was at this critical juncture called away, and her daughter eſcaped farther interrogation.

Sir Edward continued thus, with decreaſing intervals of recollection, near a fortnight; at the end of which time his phyſicians declared they had no hopes of him. In this interval all ſuſpicion concerning Mrs. Stavenell had been removed by her having fulfilled her promiſe, of ſending by the waggon whatever clothes her niece did not take with her, which plainly argued her expectation that ſhe would be carried to Marſtonbury. Lady Barbara finding Sir Edward grow daily worſe, and as Mrs. Stavenell was his only relation, overcame every prejudice which her want of judicious care of her daughter had given birth to, and wrote to her, deſiring to ſee her; but, as if conſcious that ſhe deſerved reprehenſion, ſhe declined coming.

In a few days after Sir Edward's phyſicians had ceaſed to hope for his life, the predictions were verified: he died, and left his wife almoſt worn out with anxiety and fatigue, and his daughter overwhelmed with grief for his loſs: her ſorrow had many ſources, for though in concern for her father all other conſiderations had been abſorbed, there were times when a remembrance of a different

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ent ſpecies of affliction broke in on her, and rendered her very ill able to ſupport additional misfortune.

CHAP. VIII.

SCHEMING.

IMMEDIATELY after the funeral, Lord Drumferne came over to Marſtonbury, to aſſiſt his ſiſter in the ſettlement of her affairs. A will was found, made on the birth of Conſtance, which left both her and Lady Barbara amply provided for; but a farther inveſtigation proved that this proviſion no longer exiſted; whatever was conveyed by it had been alineated, and there was too much reaſon to fear the debts would as far exceed expectation as the means to defray them fell ſhort of it.

Sir Edward had always been of a reſerved diſpoſition; his wife was never truſted with the knowledge of his circumſtances; the money ſhe wanted he ſupplied her with, and ſettled all, excepting her perſonal expences, with his ſteward; ſhe could therefore only conjecture from appearances that he was rich, and had nothing to rely on but his prudence;

dence; a ſecurity which ſhe never ſuſpected would fail: ſhe knew that he had ſuffered by an unſucceſsful navigation ſcheme, in which the adventurers, of whom he was the principal, had loſt their money; but ſhe was ignorant of the extent to which he had engaged. It now appeared, that his own private fortune had bought the Marſtonbury eſtate, unimproved as it was at the time of the purchaſe; that her fortune, which was not large, had been expended in the gratification of a very coſtly taſte for building, gardening, and extenſive cultivation; that they had lived at an annual expence exceeding his penſion; and that to ſupply the current demands, the houſe and eſtate had been piece-meal mortgaged to nearly their value, ſo that little advantage could reſult from a ſale; and that there would be ſcarcely more than ſufficient to pay the debts.

From the evils attendant on ſo injudicious and ſo criminal a diſregard of his family concerns, Lord Drumferne, who was aware that Sir Edward's affairs would not turn out well, imagined his ſiſter and niece were ſecured by her ſettlement: five thouſand pounds in the funds had been left to Lady Barbara by a relation ſoon after her marriage, the intereſt of which her huſband had received, and had always ſaid ſhould be ſuffered to accumulate as a fortune for his daughter: a preſſing occaſion had induced him to alter his purpoſe; the money therefore was not to be found, and nothing more

more than the principal was to be expected: of the ſecurity of this Lord Drumferne did not doubt, till his ſiſter informed him that the ſettlement had been, with the conſent of her only ſurviving truſtee, who was engaged in the navigation project, annulled a few months before. Sir Edward had, contrary to his uſual cuſtom, made her acquainted with his ſcheme for cutting a canal of many miles in length: he had ſtated to her the benefit that would accrue to his eſtate, which was well covered with timber, from a mode of conveyance ſo eaſy as water-carriage; he had aſſured her that a few years would not only re-imburſe him, but that, from a toll to be eſtabliſhed, permanent advantages would be derived; and repreſenting it to her that his project would be ruined unleſs he could anſwer a greater demand for ready money than it was poſſible for him without aſſiſtance to raiſe, he prevailed on her to give up her ſettlement, and promiſed to ſecure her in a way more convenient to himſelf from all accident: ſhe knew of the will he had made, and on his ſaying that it ſhould remain unrevoked till he could make a more beneficial proviſion for her and her daughter, ſhe willingly conſented; and by a miſplaced confidence renounced even the certainty of a maintenance.

But Lady Barbara, notwithſtanding this load of calamity was rendered of double weight by anxiety for Conſtance, would not ſuffer herſelf to ſink under it; ſhe exerted her fortitude to the utmoſt; immediately

immediately leſſened the number of her ſervants, and her expences in every way; ſhe collected an account of all the debts; and, as far as ſhe could, diſcharged them: but the eſtate was a cumberſome thing; and in the preſent ſtate of the navigation ſcheme, ſhe had no hopes of it's fetching enough to pay off the mortgage. What was beſt to be done, or how even to avoid total ruin, it was not eaſy to diſcover; but this conſolation ſhe had, that ſo greatly were the creditors and claimants diſpoſed to accommodate her, that they had jointly offered to accept ſecurity in the way leaſt inconvenient to her, and to wait patiently the arrangement of her embarraſſed affairs.

CHAP. IX.

ASSURANCE.

SIR Edward had been dead ten days, and no probability had appeared of any more eligible method of adjuſting his accounts than that of reſignin: whatever he had to the diſcharge of his debts, and compounding them, when one morning,

ing, as his daughter was ſitting alone in gloomy ſadneſs, ſhe was told a ſervant deſired to ſpeak with her; Lord Farnford had taught her to be ſo diſtruſtful that ſhe never admitted any ſtranger when Lady Barbara was not preſent: ſhe therefore requeſted to know who the perſon was and what his buſineſs. A letter with a meſſage ſignifying that the bearer, who was gone, would call the next morning for an anſwer, was brought to her, and a glance at the ſuperſcription made her ſuſpect it to be from Lord Farnford; but ſhe was not ſo ſure of it as to warrant her refuſing to open it, and as ſhe did not doubt her being proof againſt any thing his lordſhip could ſay, ſhe ventured to break the ſeal, and was equally diſpleaſed and aſtoniſhed to find the contents theſe:

'Pictbourne, 3d May.

'My dear Miſs Fitzarthur,

'I am recalled from a ſtate of exile, which your 'ſeverity and the treachery of ſome in whom I 'confided made neceſſary, and from a ſtate of de-'ſpair, intolerable to a love like mine, by the hope 'that I may now prevail on you to relent. I learnt 'this day that you have loſt your father; a miſ-'fortune which, as it is the occaſion of grief to my 'Conſtance, I lament; and I am alſo told the ex-'pectations the world had formed of his wealth 'have been, by a conjunction of circumſtances 'balked. In this, as I have the means of anni-'hilating the evil, I confeſs I rejoice:—it may,

'it

'it muſt ſoften your obduracy, and it puts within 'my reach the greateſt poſſible felicity.—Every im-'pediment to my ſucceſs is removed:—the prudence 'of accepting an offer which you have hitherto 'diſdainfully rejected muſt be obvious to you; 'chance has done that for me that my endeavours 'could not; and I can now with confidence look 'on you as mine.

'After the efforts I have made, and the victory 'it has gained over my juſt reſentment of your late 'conduct, it is needleſs to urge the ſincerity of my 'love. I am not angry at any former diſappoint-'ments; I acquieſce in them willingly, becauſe I 'am convinced that all objections will be now ſo 'countervailed as to make you yield without re-'luctance: you ſhall name the time and place when 'and where this ſurrender of yourſelf ſhall be 'made, provided you do not inſiſt on any unne-'ceſſary delay, to which you know me well 'enough to believe I cannot ſubmit.

'I have no reaſon, and conſequently no wiſh to 'conceal my intention from Lady Barbara: her 'good ſenſe and penetration will incline her to my 'intereſt; and, however diſpleaſed ſhe may have 'been with my defeated precipitation, ſhe muſt now 'conſider it as adding to the proofs of my paſſion 'for you, and will with pleaſure reſign her lovely 'daughter into the arms of a moſt ardently ena-'moured h and.

'The proſpect of my unlooked-for ſucceſs

'makes

'makes me giddy:—I can write of you and think 'of you till I am in a fever:—could I communi- 'cate the warmth of my affection to you, I ſhould 'be ſupremely happy; a ſhort time, I do not 'doubt, will effect this, and every action of my 'life ſhall be devoted to the purpoſe.

'I ſend this letter by a ſpecial meſſenger, im- 'powered to receive your ſealed anſwer. I ſhall 'immediately follow him, and will wait at Farn- 'ford till I know when I may ſee you: my ſiſters 'are ſtill there, and if you would give me the 'meeting at a place you once favoured with your 'commendation, I would ſpare you the trouble 'of writing: we will not diſpute to whom the vi- 'ſit is made; let them have the credit, me the ad- 'vantage:—but if your extreme regard to punctilio 'ſhould forbid this, I will reſt contented with per- 'miſſion to come to Marſtonbury, in hopes I ſhall 'not quit it without the completion of my wiſhes.

'With reſpect to lucrative advantages, though 'you have given me convincing evidence that 'you diſregard them, it is fit I ſhould ſatisfy your 'friends: the caſual alteration in your views can 'have no effect on me, and I ſhall think nothing 'too much to expreſs my gratitude, if you will re- 'ceive me without your wonted reſerve, and al- 'low me to take from your lips the ratification of 'my pardon for all former tranſgreſſions.

'I ſhall, with much greater impatience than

'your

'your ſang froid can imagine, wait your anſwer,
'and for leave to prove myſelf,

'Your moſt devoted, your moſt affectionate

'FARNFORD.'

The ſtyle of this letter gave Miſs Fitzarthur, the firſt occaſion of remarking on the change her father's death had wrought; while ſhe was imagined the heireſs of wealth, even Lord Farnford's language was reſpectful, now it was more than improperly familiar; ſhe was angry at his confident expectations of ſucceſs, and however, advantageous and honourable his propoſal might be, in the manner of making it, it was inſulting. But it was a ſhort time ſhe could allow for uſeleſs reflection; the letter was to be anſwered, and though ſhe could not heſitate how it was to be done, yet how *ſhe* ſhould do it was a queſtion: ſhe knew him, ſhe had to deal with too well to think ſilence would diſcourage him, and was therefore obliged to direct her thoughts towards writing to him. Could ſhe have done it, without diſtreſſing Lady Barbara by ſhewing her the encouragement their misfortunes had afforded, ſhe would have begged her to execute this office for her: to give her pain was to aggravate her's, and rather than do ſo, ſhe choſe to truſt to her own heart, that it would enable her to repreſent, as forcibly as ſhe felt, her utter averſion to comply with his lordſhip's offer.

That her mother might not perceive any thing had

had disordered her, when she heard her coming, she retired up stairs, and began to reflect on the propriety of concealing Lord Farnford's letter: she weighed the reasons on both sides; and started as if struck by a flash of lightning, when a thought came into her mind, that perhaps her intended rejection of him was unwarrantable. The distracted state of their affairs could be by no way so effectually relieved as by accepting his proposal; it would end all her mother's anxity for her, and was in every point of view so advantageous a connexion that, could she conquer her dislike, the evening of her surviving parent's life might yet be happy: in refusing it, she had no prospect that did not include misery. Exposed continually to his persecution, to poverty, to contumely, to reproach for unjustifiable pride and preference of her own inclination to the permanent interests of her family, she feared she must no longer refuse that which she would have rather died than accept. Summing up all arguments, she found that *for* this sacrifice there was all that regarded her mother's happiness and her own safety; *against* it her abhorrence of Lord Farnford, her detestation of his libertinism, and superadded to all, and more forcible than all, a still remaining and not to be eradicated affection for Lord Calorne: notwithstanding he had deceived her, notwithstanding she had reason to think him equally immoral, all accusations of him were written in sand, while the extreme delicacy of his attachment

tachment to her, the friendſhip he had manifeſted for her, his care to prevent all uneaſineſs from reaching her, and the ten thouſand virtues ſhe imagined ſhe had diſcovered in him, were indelibly engraven on her heart: that he had impoſed on her was to her more a diſappointment than a cauſe of anger: his departure from his engagement could not juſtify her following his example: perhaps he might yet explain his conduct; perhaps much ſhe had heard had been exaggerated: but were ſuch refined notions and contingent probabilities to counterbalance the peace ſhe might, by refuſing to liſten to them purchaſe for her mother? Were ideal virtue and ſpeculative honour to oppoſe an act in itſelf laudable, and in it's conſequences beneficial? and what right had ſhe to claim an exemption from the neceſſity of ſubmitting to circumſtances? Anſwering theſe queſtions impartially, ſhe perceived that ſhe might err, even by conſcientiouſly preferring a ſtate, where ſhe was not aſſured of a proviſion, to that which held out to her every temptation, excepting peace of mind: had no one beſide herſelf ſuffered by her firmneſs, ſhe could not for a moment have deliberated: ſhe would have choſen the moſt laborious ſervitude ſhe was capable of, rather than any thing Lord Farnford could promiſe; but the intereſt of another was far dearer to her than her own, and burſting into tears, ſhe reſolved that every conſideration ſhould give way to filial duty, to tell Lord Farnford ingenuouſly what

what were the motives to her compliance,—to repreſent to him the deficiency of her affection,—to refer him to her mother, and, with her approbation to truſt to that ſlender ſecurity his honour,—that he would not revenge by ill-uſage her yet ſucceſsful endeavours to avoid him.

The taſk of refuſing him was enviable compared to that of accepting him: ſhe dared not think of what ſhe was about to do, but haſtily ſat down to addreſs him whom ſhe feared ſhe muſt ſoon acknowledge her lord. What words to chuſe, or how to ſay any thing to him that was not expreſſive of diſlike, was a matter of the greateſt difficulty:—ſhe took out his letter, read it over again, hoping to ſtimulate herſelf, by his profeſſion of regard, to ſomething like a return:—it was in vain, every line diſguſted her ſtill more: ſhe could not, even by repreſenting to herſelf the diſintereſtedneſs of his attachment and his generoſity in ſtill perſevering, kindle the leaſt ſpark of affection in her breaſt:—his love was licentious, it was not meliorated by friendſhip, nor was that eſteem an ingredient in it, without which it ceaſes to be a virtue, and can no longer than it is fed by novelty be durable.

Thinking on the ſubject did but the more diſable her from acting; the victory over her prejudices was, at any rate, to be obtained, and therefore flattering herſelf with recollecting that pain, no more than pleaſure is ſo great as in expectation,

with the prospect of contributing to her mother's happiness, if she could conceal her reluctance, and the hope of enjoying Lady Maria's intimate acquaintance, she cherished a transient flow of spirits and wrote:

'My Lord,

'The consciousness that I increase the sufferings of a valued parent, the possibility of relieving them, and the dread of farther misery, oblige me to do violence to my inclination.—I must be wretched, and can only hope to avoid making another so.—You are not ignorant of my sentiments:—estimate my misfortunes by my saying that, though they remain unchanged, they shall not oppose you.—Your application must be made to Lady Barbara Fitzarthur, and,

So far she proceeded; farther she could not: one moment she thought it a justifiable, the next a scandalous compliance;—she could not approve it: the tears gushed from her eyes, she threw away the pen she had writen with; tore the sheet of paper through the middle, and became immoderately agitated.

It was in this situation with Lord Farnford's letter and that she had torn lying on the table before her, that Lady Barbara, whom her long absence had made uneasy, found her; terrified at an appearance which strongly induced a suspicion that she was out of her senses, she asked the cause of her tears, but could get no answer; nor was she

more

more ſucceſsful in her inquiry whom ſhe was writing to: ſhe took up the letters, and read that which was incomplete, without the gratification of her curioſity: the myſtery was explained by a tranſient glance over the other, and what had paſſed in Conſtance's mind, and the cauſe of her preſent diſtreſs were diſcovered: ſhe laid the letters again on the table, and drawing a chair, ſaid;—Do you know, my dear, what you are doing?—Why did you not ſhew me that letter?—I would have anſwered it for you;—you muſt not write ſo:—I ſee what motive has actuated you, and am ſure you ſay truly that you do violence to your own inclination:—I am ſorry you have ſo little confidence as for a moment to think it prudent to accept poſitive miſery that you may avoid a poſſible and more ſupportable evil.—Has Lord Calorne abſolutely renounced his intentions?—Are you ſure our misfortunes will detach him from you?—till then you are not at liberty even if you *choſe* it, to marry Lord Farnford.

Had Conſtance been in the laſt ſtate of ſtupefaction ſuch a dagger as this would have rouſed her; it recalled her powers of recollection, it enabled her to ſpeak, and, for the firſt time, to tell Lady Barbara ſhe was deceived in Lord Calorne.—I hope not, ſhe replied:—you want courage my dear girl,—he is not ſo mercenary, and our affairs may yet mend.—O, Madam, anſwered Miſs Fitzarthur, if it were not that I muſt add to your afflictions, I would give you ſuch proofs of his baſeneſs, as even

I, partial as I am, dare not reject:—it is he who forced me to leave Mrs. Stavenell's, and he has broken my heart;—I cannot tell you more now:—you ſhall know all at another time. Lady Barbara's countenance changed; ſhe roſe, and ſaying to her daughter—I will not diſtreſs you,—try to compoſe your ſpirits, and I will be with you in half an hour, quitted the room.

Conſtance ſaw the neceſſity of revealing the whole of Lord Calorne's conduct, and hoped when relieved of this burden ſhe ſhould be happier; ſhe therefore endeavoured to collect herſelf, and determined to tell Lady Barbara of every thing, ſo riſque reprehenſion for weakneſs in ſtill retaining her affection, which though ſhe expected her mother would condemn, ſhe hoped ſhe would pity.

The tears were in Lady Barbara's eyes when ſhe returned, but ſhe nevertheleſs encouraged her daughter, and heard from her as coherent and circumſtantial a narration of all that had befallen her while in London as the agitated ſtate of her ſpirits would allow her to give: it was now unneceſſary to ſay that Lord Calorne's impoſition had ruined her peace; what ſhe ſuffered in relating the particulars of it plainly evinced her feelings.

Neither underſtanding nor temper were ever better adapted to the purpoſes of conſolation than Lady Barbara's: at a time when ſhe herſelf ſtood in need of every ſupport, ſhe preached ſubmiſſion to her weeping daughter; ſhe ſympathized with her;

ſhe commended her retreat from town, and the reſolution with which ſhe had behaved; but gently blamed her for not having ſooner informed her of her ſituation, both with reſpect to Lord Farnford and Lord Calorne: ſhe acknowledged herſelf deceived in her opinion of the latter, and ſeveral times queſtioned Conſtance as to the proof ſhe had of what ſhe had heard: even in her correct judgment it was indiſputable, and ſhe no longer urged her daughter's engagement to him as a reaſon for her forbidding Lord Farnford's hopes, but her averſion to him was argument ſufficient: She therefore undertook to anſwer the propoſition, which ſhe did by acknowledging the honour intended her daughter, by poſitively declining it, and by a civil intimation that, ſhould he ſolicit her any further, her friends would intereſt themſelves for her. The ſervant called as he had promiſed the next morning, and was the bearer of this equally unexpected and unwelcome repulſe to his maſter.

Conſtance felt her mind eaſed by the diſcloſure of her grief, and thinking it criminal to harbour an affection, which reaſon and honour loudly commanded her to repreſs, longer than was neceſſary to efface its impreſſion, ſhe left nothing undone that would obliterate the remembrance of Lord Calorne, and ſubmitted without murmuring to her fate. What ſhe had ſeen of the world had ſo diſguſted her that ſhe felt no reluctance in retiring from it; and ſhe had ſo fully experienced the in-

efficacy of external happineſs to produce mental tranquillity, that ſhe eſtimated her loſs of fortune as little: her grief for the death of her father was at firſt exceſſive, and for ſome weeks violent, but it ſettled at length into a calm melancholy, which ſhe would have indulged, had not the neceſſity of exerting herſelf to cheer her mother forbidden even this unenvied pleaſure.

CHAP. X.

ACCOMMODATION.

LADY BARBARA's proſpect in a little time brightened: the perſon who had the next greateſt intereſt to Sir Edward's in the navigation, and who was her truſtee, was indefatigable in his endeavours to ſerve her, from a conviction that it was his conſent and advice that had involved her: his hopes of ſucceſs in making the canal were well-founded; perſeverance was the chief thing required, and having rendered almoſt impoſſible the intervention of ſuch accidents as had hitherto impeded them, the adventurers did not

deſpair

deſpair of a return of their money. This gentleman would willingly have repaid what Sir Edward had advanced, and have taken his ſhare of the profit, but he alſo had ſtrained every nerve to carry on the undertaking, and could not raiſe ſo large a ſum, he therefore made Lady Barbara a very equitable propoſal, to allow her annually 300l. and her daughter 100l. till the work was completed; on condition that they then made a proportionable abatement in their ſhare of the advantages: this ſhe accepted, and with regard to the eſtate it was agreed that it ſhould be let altogether for a year: what this would produce it was computed would pay the intereſt of the mortgage, for that ſpace; and by the ſale of thoſe articles which could not be deemed belonging to the houſe, it was hoped the remaining creditors might be ſatisfied.

Amidſt all her various diſappointments and afflictions, Sir Edward Fitzarthur's widow had the comfort of ſeeing all concerned in her affairs content: even thoſe who had the moſt at ſtake were ſo convinced of their ſecurity in depending on her, and ſo intereſted for her, that a proviſion for her was firſt thought on: her ſcrupulous honour, her ſagacity, her knowledge of accounts, and her anxiety, leſt any one ſhould ſuffer by forbearance, prejudiced all who had any buſineſs to tranſact with her; and many believed that, had *ſhe* been Sir Edward's ſteward, the difficulties by which his family were embarraſſed had been eſcaped.

Her plan of life was ſoon ſettled, ſhe took a ſmall houſe at a few miles diſtant, whither ſhe purpoſed retiring with her daughter, as ſoon as ſhe had a proſpect of letting Marſtonbury: ſhe retained two of her ſervants who were moſt attached to her; and with heroical fortitude, and a becoming contempt for ſublunary enjoyments, accommodated herſelf to the change without ever being heard to repine at it, or to charge, as ſhe ſurely might, Sir Edward's love of oſtentatious parade, and his indulgence of a fine taſte as the cauſe of her misfortunes.

A new ſource of ſorrow augmented the difficulty which Conſtance found in ſupporting herſelf under calamities, which while they oppreſt, enervated her: Lady Maria Peryton, whoſe health had ever been precarious, was in a ſhort time after her coming to Farnford-park, ſeized with a fever that terminated a blameleſs life, in leſs than a month after Conſtance loſt her father. Notwithſtanding ſhe had renounced all expectation of future pleaſure to be derived from her friendſhip, the ſtroke was ſevere; one of the few who were ſincerely concerned in her welfare was gone, and recollecting the many kindneſſes ſhe had ſhewn her, and the delightful hours they had ſpent together when they had chid the haſty-footed time for parting them: though theſe were circumſtances which gratified her in the retroſpect, ſo increaſed her affliction, that leſt ſhe ſhould be incapacitated from performing thoſe little

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tle offices for Lady Barbara, which filial piety and perſonal eſteem for the object of it, made her willingly undertake, ſhe was forced to be guilty of that which ſhe condemned as ingratitude, and by every means to drive Lady Maria from her thoughts.

She had now no one female friend excepting her mother, near her; there were, it is true, ſeveral ladies who had been her companions before ſhe went to London, ſtill in the place; but as Sir Edward's manner of living repelled intimacy, her acquaintance never extended farther than an airing with them on horſeback, or an invitation to dinner: ſuch attachments as theſe it is no wonder ſhould ceaſe when it was no longer in her power to return civilities. Lord and Lady Reycolm's intention of returning ſoon to England had been thwarted by accidents and a neceſſity of viſiting relations ſcattered in diſtant parts of the continent: ſhe had ever been an uncertain correſpondent, her letters were little more than excuſes for omiſſions and liſts of engagements; and Miſs Fitzarthur had not heard from her ſince ſhe came to Marſtonbury, nor knew ſhe where to direct to her; ſo that every poſſibility of lightning her affliction by the potent ſympathy of friendſhip was cut off.

The diſcovery made on Sir Edward's deceaſe fully accounted for many particulars of his conduct which had before appeared irreconcilable with his general temper: his anger at Lord Reycolm's

departure from his intention, his earneſtneſs for Lord Farnford, and his ready acceptance of the laſt match propoſed to him for his daughter, were no longer myſteries; knowing the deſperate ſtate of his affairs he naturally wiſhed her diſpoſed of, and when ſhe conſidered the reaſon he had for being anxious on that head, ſhe could not but think her obligations to him very great for having forborne to urge farther what was ſo repugnant to her inclination. Perhaps Lord Drumferne's acquieſcence in his ſons's change of ſentiments might be traced to a principle ſomething ſimilar; he was certainly aware that Sir Edward was engaging too deeply, and he might foreſee that any connexion with his family would be diſadvantageous. Theſe circumſtances, weighed, it occurred to Conſtance that a clue was to be found which ſhould lead to Lord Calorne's motives for his conduct; ſhe ſuppoſed that when he firſt declared himſelf he was of the general opinion that her fortune would be conſiderable, that he had afterwards heard how her father was involved, and that therefore he had cooled, as knowing ſuch a match would be imprudent;—that retaining ſtill ſome part of his regard for her, this neceſſity had occaſioned the dejection of his ſpirits, which had ſo alarmed her, and that, being unwilling to deſert for mercenary reaſons, he had ſuffered his affection to get the better of every impediment and had madly urged her to marry him privately. Thus Lord Calorne

ſtood

ſtood acquitted, and Conſtance blamed herſelf for her precipitate judgment of him, but ſhe forgot the moſt ſubſtantial juſtification of what ſhe had done;—What was become of Miſs Greyburne and his children?—how did ſhe reconcile his negociating a marriage with Miſs Ecklow, while he was ſoliciting her, to her notions of his honour, and her confidence that he could not do wrong? When ſhe recollected theſe obſtacles to her thinking well of him ſhe was bewildered in doubt, and her deliberation generally concluded in a flood of tears: for avoiding, even by a method not ſtrictly warrantable, the ſhipwreck her fortunes had undergone ſhe could not blame him, on the contrary ſhe rejoiced that ſhe had brought no miſery on him; but for his duplicity, and for his aſſuming a character in order to impoſe on her, even Miſs Fitzarthur, his beſt advocate, his partial judge, could not deem him leſs than extremely reprehenſible.

In a very ſhort time after Lady Barbara had ſignified her intention of letting Marſtonbury, a tenant was procured for it, and the expectations formed of this advantage were not diſappointed; the leaſe was to commence from the enſuing Chriſtmas, when ſhe agreed to quit the houſe, and purpoſed taking poſſeſſion of her humble habitation: every thing was ſettled to her ſatisfaction, and ſhe had now no earthly ſolicitude excepting that, for her daughter; but it was evident that notwithſtanding her reſignation and fortitude, her conſtitution gave

way, and Conſtance, with the moſt pungent ſorrow, ſaw her health daily declining: all the comfort and ſupport ſhe could adminiſter, Lady Barbara experienced from her, who when her heart was torn by ten thouſand painful remembrances, and awed by her mother's approaching danger, often forced herſelf to aſſume a fictitious chearfulneſs.

Lord Drumferne's friendſhip for Lady Barbary, though it ſtimulated him to ſome exertions for her, wanted that cordiality which ſoftens the receipt of favours, and what he did was done as if to rid himſelf of the odium of neglecting her: an accident happening which prevented her having the houſe ſhe had taken, and the family who were coming to Marſtonbury wiſhing for a little time to make alterations for their convenience, he invited her to come over to him: to this, leſt ſhe ſhould be obliged to leave the houſe ſhe had let, before ſhe could fix on another, ſhe conſented; and it was agreed that ſix weeks before Chriſtmas ſhe ſhould quit Marſtonbury, and with her daughter become her brother's gueſt: a neceſſity to which ſhe yielded rather from fear that her declining it ſhould offend, than from any readineſs to increaſe her obligations where they were much prized and ſparingly dealt.

CHAP. XI.

MONARCHY.

THERE had for ſome years reſided in the neighbourhood of Marſtonbury a family with whom Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzarthur had lived on terms of cloſer intimacy than with any other: the gentleman, a Mr. Aiſtrey, was a Weſt India merchant, and his wife had been a ſchool-fellow of Lady Barbara's, which circumſtance, and a mutual eſteem and affection ſubſiſting between the ladies, made their viſits to each other frequent. They had an only daughter juſt entering her eighteenth year, in whom all Mr. Aiſtrey's hopes were centered; ſhe poſſeſſed a large ſhare of beauty, and being known the heireſs to her father's fortune, attracted obſervation, and raiſed her father's expectations of eſtabliſhing her in the world, to a pitch of enthuſiaſm: this young lady had manifeſted a more than ordinary degree of attachment to Conſtance, which was returned on her part by that regard which our believing ourſelves dear to another has a tendency to excite, but as their underſtanding and inclinations were very different, their intimacy wanted the eſſentials of friendſhip.

When

When the time fixed for Lady Barbara's quitting Marſtonbury was nearly arrived, Mrs. Aiſtrey, who had made her many conſolatory viſits, wrote to her in the moſt polite and affectionate terms, deſiring that Miſs Fitzarthur might, when her mother went to Lord Drumferne's, come to them, and ſpend ſome time with them in London, whither, at the beginning of December, they purpoſed going; alledging the bad conſequences of her being confined in the country while her ſpirits were ſo weak, and aſſuring her that ſhe ſhould live with them in the way beſt calculated to diſpel the gloom, which being the partner of her melancholy could not fail to increaſe. This invitation, which was conſidered by Lady Barbara as a ſingular inſtance of benevolence, ſhe immediately communicated to her daughter; but Conſtance could not admit the idea of a ſecond ſeparation; to leave her, and when her health was in a precarious ſtate, ſhe could on no account conſent to, and ſhe begged that it might be declined. But Lady Barbara repreſented to her that, after the reverſe of fortune which they had experienced, to reject favours was equally imprudent and unbecoming, that, if this viſit had nothing to attract her, it would be beneficial by detaching her attention from objects which could only renew the remembrance of their misfortunes; and that ſhe knew of nothing in the world which would ſo probably reſtore the calmneſs of her ſpirits, and enable her to look with confidence

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at the proſpect before her, as the ſociety and example of Mrs. Aiſtrey, to whoſe many amiable qualities and improved talents Conſtance was no ſtranger, and who had ſhewn her fitneſs for what ſhe undertook, by having borne with fortitude the affliction of loſing many children, and that, ſtill greater, of being againſt her conſent married to a man infinitely inferior to her in underſtanding, and thirty years older than herſelf.

Whatever diſlike Conſtance felt to leaving her mother and again entering the world, when Lady Barbara ſaid that, as Lord Drumferne's invitation ſeemed more the reſult of duty than friendſhip, ſhe ſhould be happier to have her diſpoſed of otherwiſe, ſhe no longer oppoſed her, and a promiſe was returned to Mrs. Aiſtrey that Miſs Fitzarthur ſhould come to her.

It was fortunate for Conſtance that the interval preceding the time appointed was ſo fully employed as to leave her little opportunity of indulging her own thoughts; elſe the being compelled as it were to quit the place of her birth, with the addition of ſo many painful circumſtances, would have ſunk her to her loweſt ſtate of melancholy. The morning of her departure arrived, and ſhe prepared to bid an eternal adieu to Marſtonbury: ſhe was to travel with Lady Barbara the firſt ſeven miles, they were then to ſeparate, and Mr. Aiſtrey's carriage was to meet Miſs Fitzarthur, and carry her the remaining five miles. But not all her endeavours to ſpare her

her mother pain could enable her to conceal the ſorrow this parting occaſioned her; and ſo unwilling was ſhe even now to go from her, that Lady Barbara, whoſe grief, though ſuppreſſed, Conſtance knew to be as great as her own, found herſelf under a neceſſity of haſtening to proceed on her journey to Lord Drumferne's, leſt contrary to her judgment ſhe ſhould be prevailed on by her daughter's reluctance to do any thing diſreſpectful to her valued friend Mrs. Aiſtrey.

When her tears, when her entreaties that, whatever was her lot, ſhe might not be ſeparated from her mother, were found of no avail, ſhe tore herſelf from her, with no conſolation excepting that of indulging her feelings. She ſoon reached Mr. Aiſtrey's houſe, and was received by him with—Oh I am glad you are come at laſt, my young lady, for Polly has been fretting becauſe you didn't come: by Mrs. Aiſtrey with the language which good ſenſe teaches benevolence; and by Miſs Polly herſelf with proteſtations that ſhe had been longing above an age to ſee her.

Near a twelvemonth had elapſed without Conſtance's meeting Miſs Aiſtrey, ſhe having ſpent the whole of the preceding winter at Bath, where her mother was confined by illneſs, and not having accompanied her in any of her viſits to Marſtonbury ſince Sir Edward Fitzarthur's death, which omiſſion was accounted for firſt by her abſence, ſhe being with a relation in the next county, and when ſhe

ſhe returned home and was inquired after by Lady Barbara, Mrs. Aiſtrey gave as an apology that her daughter had not ſufficient ſolidity in her compoſition either to give or receive pleaſure from viſits of condolence: this intimation had informed Conſtance that her mind was in its original ſtate, but on ſeeing her, ſhe found a wonderful alteration in her perſon: all that the year had omitted to beſtow on her intellectual part was laviſhed on the corporeal; ſhe was a heroine of enormous ſize! Her countenance was ſtill fine, her features thoſe of an Apollo: had ſhe affected dignity ſhe had been majeſtic; but the levity of her mind counteracting the ponderoſity of her body, ſhe was a medley of incongruities: her height, which, though ſhe was young, would hardly admit of increaſe, was rendered more remarkable by her ſtyle of dreſs; ſhe never forbore wearing any thing becauſe it was unbecoming; but having been captivated by the appearance of the dancers at the opera, ſhe aſſumed a manner ſimilar to their's, and forgetting that her perſon was neither calculated nor intended for ſuch exhibition, ſhe judged of what they wore by its effect when on them, and became a caricature. All the compreſſive powers of whalebone were exerted in vain to make her ſhape,

'Fine by degrees and beautifully leſs:'

They changed what might have been eaſy corpulency into aſthmatic oppreſſion, and no vanity leſs than

than Miſs Aiſtrey's could have borne the purgatory ſhe endured.

Conſtance had not been many hours in the houſe before ſhe perceived that Polly was the principal perſon in the family; her inclination was the rule of her father's conduct, and, in all queſtions, he, with an inexcuſable and abſurd partiality, always ſided with her, without the leaſt reſpect to his wife. Miſs was impatient to go to London, and was manœuvring to prevail on her father to ſet out the next day, though his intention was to have ſtaid a fortnight longer in the country. Mrs. Aiſtrey had declared her diſapprobation of ſo haſty a removal, and now repreſented the inconveniencies of it, ſaying,—Surely, Mary, as Miſs Fitzarthur is come, you cannot think it dull. But miſs's deſire to quit the odious country was too great to allow her paying her viſitor the compliment her mother expected, and ſhe again reſumed her ſolicitation in the perſuaſive terms of—Now do papa—pray papa—let us go papa—and if you'll let us go, papa, you d'ont know how good I'll be.

It would have been a phenomenon not yet ſeen, if ſhe, whoſe caprice had for ſeventeen years governed; had been in this inſtance thwarted: perſeverance always wrought on her father as reaſon did on her mother, and ſhe had new cauſe for exultation. Mr. Aiſtrey fondly kiſſed his darling, and promiſed aquieſcence; at the ſame time obſerving to Miſs Fitzarthur that Polly ruled the roaſt, for that he

he could not refuſe his dear little puppet any thing; and, ſeeing her ſmile, he added, with a ſignificant wink, that a time might come when ſhe might not think him ſo great a fool as ſhe did then.

The remainder of the day was ſpent in preparations for their departure, and Conſtance when alone with this primum mobile of the family, could not forbear expreſſing her concern that Mrs. Aiſtrey went to town againſt her inclination—but this the young lady treated as a ſubject not worth a thought.

Conſtance was ſufficiently acquainted with Miſs Aiſtrey to keep her expectations of the pleaſure ſhe ſhould derive from being with her at a very moderate height; but ſhe now diſcovered ſuch a ſelfiſh concern for her own gratification, ſuch a want of reſpect to her mother, and ſuch diſregard of every thing that was commendable, that ſhe could only hope her viſit would not be *very* diſagreeable: pleaſant ſhe could not expect it to be, and ſhe feared that a farther analyſis of the characters of Mr. Aiſtrey and his Polly would make her regret ſtill more the neceſſity which had driven her from Marſtonbury.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

ASCENDENCY.

THE morning which was to confirm Miſs Aiſtrey's victory and complete her wiſhes, arrived, and ſhe was made happy by ſeeing herſelf in the road to London: many things occurred to remembrance at the moment of departure which were neceſſary for the journey, but all was left to the charge of the ſervants, that ſhe might not be forced to ſubmit to delay. No very pleaſing circumſtances ſhortened the way: Mrs. Aiſtrey was in an ill ſtate of health, and the haſty preparation ſhe, for the ſake of peace, had made, had hurried and fatigued her; her daughter's volubility would ſeldom allow her to interpoſe a word, and the manifeſt delight which her huſband took in ſeeing his *puppet* pleaſed, made him liſten with leſs attention to what Mrs. Aiſtrey ſaid than good manners required. He was himſelf a man of no converſation, and had a very ſcanty portion of intellect: the early part of his life had been devoted to getting money, and now his whole ſoul was abſorbed in a blind affection for his daughter; an affection which had ſcarcely more than inſtinct to juſtify it, but was carried to extravagance: he

he ſaw none of her failings, he diſcovered in her virtues, to which ſhe neither had, nor deſired to have any pretentions; and miſtaking a promptitude to ſpeak for an ability to judge, he implicitly ſuffered himſelf to be guided by that which he had not diſcernment to perceive was childiſh and momentary caprice. His fondneſs inſtead of producing gratitude in her, and a conſequent endeavour to merit his kindneſs, encouraged her to improve it, by every poſſible means, to her own immediate advantage: little exertion was neceſſary on her part to ſecure the continuance of his affection; his prepoſſeſſion in her favour magnified what he thought commendable, and annihilated what ſhould have been the ſubject of reprehenſion. She was, however, ſo far careful as to conceal from him what ſhe imagined might diſoblige him, and ſo far condeſcending as to pretend a ſtrong attachment to him, for as with him reſted the power, it behoved her as ſhe valued pleaſure to preſerve him always in a diſpoſition to indulge her: fully taught by experience that, in all queſtions between her and her mother, Mr. Aiſtrey would decide in her favour, ſhe paid no attention to any arguments uſed to oppoſe her abſurdities; her inclination gave the law, her gratification was the end ſought, and to that every impediment was forced to yield.

Their arrival in London the next evening raiſed Miſs Aiſtrey's ſpirits above temperate: yet, like all the votaries of caprice, ſhe was diſſatisfied though in poſſeſſion

poſſeſſion of the happineſs ſhe ſo ardently longed for: ſhe now began to lament the ſituation of her father's houſe: Bedford-row was a moſt ſhocking place to live in, ſo out of the world nobody could come near it:—This appeared by the anſwers ſhe received to be an exhauſted topic, Mrs. Aiſtrey begged her to be contented, and Mr. Aiſtrey ſaid he had often told her he would not renew his leaſe, but he muſt ſtay in the houſe till that was expired.

At length by their arrival at their deſtined port this heterogeneous party was, to Conſtance's great relief, ſeparated: a ſcene of hurry now enſued the woman who had the care of the houſe, not having been beforehand apprized of their intention had made no preparation to receive them; no fires were lighted, the room doors were to be unlocked, and many of the keys were not, in ſuch confuſion, to be found: the ſervants who were to come from the country houſe had been ſo detained that they were not yet arrived; and every thing, by preſenting a new inconvenience, cenſured this unneceſſary precipitation: a ſhort time however reſtored matters to a tolerable degree of order; and gave hopes of enjoying ſomething like peace and quietneſs. Mrs. Aiſtrey was exceſſively fatigued; but her daughter who could neither reſt herſelf nor ſuffer any one elſe to reſt, was in all parts of the houſe: nothing being found to entertain her at home, ſhe, under pretence of the chillneſs and dampneſs which the want of

previous fires occaſioned, ſent to a lady in the neighbourhood to know if ſhe would ſee her: fortunately for Miſs Aſtrey's family ſhe was at home, and accepted her offer. When ſhe was gone Mr. Aiſtrey ſet out for the coffee-houſe, and the two ladies were left to enjoy that tranquillity to which, from the moment of Conſtance's coming, they had been ſtrangers.

About nine o'clock Mr. Aiſtrey returned home, and, in leſs than an hour, his daughter, eſcorted by a gentleman who ſhe had met on her viſit, and who Conſtance found was well known to the family: Mr. Aiſtrey received him with much cordiality; his wife with rather a diſtant civility: his name was Berneil, and his dreſs beſpoke him a ſoldier: he ſeemed perfectly at home, his deportment was free to a degree of rudeneſs, and he treated Miſs Aiſtrey with ſuch familiarity as nothing leſs than the levity of her behaviour could excuſe: her ſolicitude to ſhew her authority over him diſcovered that he was one of her admirers, and her mother's manner of treating him that it was not *ſhe* who had ſingled him out; but in proportion as ſhe was cool towards him, the young lady encouraged him, and ſhe ſeconded her father's invitation to him to ſtay ſupper, though ſhe ſaw the fatigue of the day made Mrs. Aiſtrey wiſh to retire, and though the recent arrival of the ſervants made it inconvenient and improper. He readily accepted the invitation, and Mrs. Aiſtrey, who ſeemed

aware

aware of the reſtraint her preſence was, choſe rather to poſtpone her reſt than to leave a company which without her would have been very diſagreeable to Miſs Fitzarthur. At length ſupper concluded; at a little after midnight Captain Berneil went away, and Conſtance and Miſs Aiſtrey retired to their reſpective chambers.

The next morning as ſoon as Conſtance, after a refreſhing night's ſleep, roſe, Miſs Aiſtrey came to her, to aſk her to go after breakfaſt with her to her milliner's, which the former agreed to, on condition Mrs. Aiſtrey approved it, miſs changed the diſcourſe, and aſked her opinion of him whom ſhe called *her* captain: ſhe replied, I muſt not ſay any thing againſt him; but if he was not *your* captain, I ſhould ſay I neither liked his appearance nor his behaviour.—Not like his appearance nor behaviour? returned Miſs Aiſtrey; to be ſure he's little, but he's exceſſive genteel, and he keeps company with all the people of faſh.—If you was to be with him a little while, you'd hear what great acquaintance he has: What is it, my dear creature, that you diſlike in him?—His amazing familiarity, ſaid Conſtance:—I ſhould have felt very uneaſy if any gentleman had behaved to me as he did to you;—I was really in pain for you, for it diſtreſſes one very much.—Oh! as for that, replied Miſs Aiſtrey, he and I are old friends; I knew him laſt winter at Bath, and I can make him behave juſt as I pleaſe:—if I frown, he dares not

ſpeak

ſpeak, and I love to my heart to torment him. —I hope his brother won't die, for then I muſt determine, and that will put an end to my ſport.

Has he a brother in danger of dying? Conſtance aſked—Yes, returned Miſs Aiſtrey, he has been dying ever ſince I knew the captain, and if he dies, papa ſays I ſhall have Berneil, becauſe then the pretty ſprig will be Sir William:—how do you think Lady Berneil will ſound?—He'll have a monſtrous fortune:—you can't conceive, my dear creature, how I am diverted to hear poor little Billy wiſhing his brother would be ſo obliging as to die; but I hope he'll hold out this winter.—What then, ſaid Conſtance, you do not like Captain Berneil?—I don't know whether I do or I don't, Miſs replied:—I believe I ſhould be ſoon tired of the monkey, though he's monſtrous good-natured:—I can do what I will with him, and that's the chief thing you know;—but there's one in the world—can you keep a ſecret?—Miſs Fitz-arthur profeſſed ſhe could not, and begged ſhe might not be truſted; notwithſtanding which, her talkative companion continued,—Well but I muſt tell you.—Conſtance again declined her confidence, but ſhe, not diſcouraged, taking on herſelf to anſwer for her whom ſhe was about to truſt that ſhe would not betray her, and, repenting, having called what ſhe had to communicate a ſecret, reſumed,—You muſt know I went laſt ſummer to pay a viſit to a young lady, a neice of my mother's, and

there I ſaw—I cannot ſtay to hear you, Miſs Aiſtrey, ſaid Conſtance; the clock has ſtruck ten ſome time ago, and I am ſure breakfaſt is ready:—Pray do not let us make Mrs. Aiſtrey wait for us. Lord I an't half dreſt, replied ſhe:—I know the old gentleman can't eat his breakfaſt without me, but if you have a mind to go down, I'll come when I'm ready.

The morning was devoted by Miſs Aiſtrey to viſiting all the artificers employed in the decoration of her perſon; ſhe teized Conſtance into accompanying her, who was by this time pretty well convinced that if ſhe complied not with every thing ſhe propoſed, ſhe ſhould offend her; and if ſhe did comply ſhe could enjoy very little peace. As Miſs Fitzarthur's ſtrength was not equal to that of her companion, Mrs. Aiſtrey obligingly inſiſted on their going in the carriage, the limits of their tour were by this extended: they returned almoſt at dinner time, with an expenſive cargo of that ſort of manufacture which is calculated to catch thoſe who appeal to their eyes inſtead of their prudence, without Miſs Aiſtrey's having, with all her eloquence, been able to perſuade Conſtance to be a purchaſer: ſhe expreſſed her aſtoniſhment at her forbearance, and threw out a few hints that ſhe was very difficient in taſte.

When they came home, they found Captain Berneil waiting to offer his ſervices to attend them to the play: Mrs. Aiſtrey declined it, and under the ſanction

ſanction of her example, Conſtance excuſed herſelf: two out of three having refuſed him, he ſeemed to have dropped his intention, till Miſs Aiſtrey ſaid: —Well, if Miſs Fitzarthur won't go, ſhe'll be ſo good as to ſtay with mama, and I can go.—I will go with you too, Polly, interfered her father.—This was reſolved on and executed, and Mrs. Aiſtrey and Conſtance were again left to a tete-a-tete.

From her, Conſtance learnt that this was the general diſpoſition of the young lady's time; the morning was ſpent in ſhopping or viſits, the evening in public amuſements or large parties: ſhe therefore told Mrs. Aiſtrey that ſhe hoped neither ſhe nor Miſs Aiſtrey would be diſpleaſed if ſhe often preferred ſtaying at home, as her ſpirits was not in a ſtate to make the ſight of many ſtrangers agreeable, nor could ſhe, if her health were better, reconcile with propriety her appearing in public. Mrs. Aiſtrey's countenance ſufficiently declared that this reſolution did not offend her:—I told Mary, ſaid ſhe, that you would not like to lead ſuch a life as ſhe does; but ſhe and her father ſeemed certain that you could not withſtand the amuſements of London: you will then believe that I am not diſappointed in finding you more diſpoſed to be a companion for me, than for her; and I dare ſay ſhe will be equally well pleaſed to find means through you to remove the only objection her father ever makes to her abſence from home,

though it never yet detained her, the leaving me entirely alone. I ſhould be ſorry, ſhe continued, to prevent your partaking of what you could enjoy; perhaps in a little time you may be able now and then to go with her; your ſpirits will mend, the world will appear differently, and I did not bring you here for the ſake of immuring you.

In a few days after her arrival in town, Conſtance received a letter, which had been ſent to Marſtonbury, and was forwarded by Lady Barbara, from Lord Reycolm: it was an unexpected pleaſure and very gratifying, as ſhe had begun to fear from his ſilence and that of Lady Reycolm, that ſhe was almoſt forgotten: this ſhe now found ſhe had no reaſon to ſuſpect; he wrote in terms of the warmeſt friendſhip, and gave her a copious account of what had paſſed with reſpect to himſelf ſince they met; he had heard of the death of Sir Edward Fitzarthur, but was ignorant of the ſituation in which he had left his family; he expreſſed his ſorrow at an event which muſt have afflicted one to whom he owed ſo much, and for whom his regard was ſo ſincere, and politely wiſhed he had been ſooner informed of this calamity, that he might have added his condolence, and his offers of ſervice to thoſe of her other friends.

But this letter ſatisfactory and affectionate as it was, furniſhed matter of ſurprize to Conſtance; it was extended to the utmoſt limits of a ſheet of paper, he ſeemed to have written when at leiſure,

and

and yet not one word was mentioned of his wife: in his account of various journies he uniformly ſpoke in the plural, yet he was not joined by her in the uſual compliments, nor could it be diſcovered that ſuch a perſon exiſted: this was extraordinary, and no way to be accounted for, except by ſuppoſing it an unintentional omiſſion, and ſuch Conſtance was obliged to imagine it: but what gave her ſtill more concern was, that this letter bore ſtrong marks of a mind not perfectly at eaſe; there was nothing chearful in it, no intimation that he was happy, nor no deſign mentioned of returning to England: he told her he had much to ſay to her when they met, and that he wiſhed to ſee her, with a ſlight hint of the pleaſure it would give him, if all circumſtances concurred to render her coming to them expedient: this thought he, however, immediately dropt, and ſeemed convinced of the impracticability of ſuch a ſcheme.

The ſtyle in which he wrote brought ſtrongly to Conſtance's remembrance the ſtate of dejection he was in before he found Adelaide; it ſeemed the conſequence of ſingular oppreſſion; but it was now much more difficult to attribute it to any cauſe than then; it ſeemed to be without cauſe: he had married the woman whom he preferred to all others, it was a match that had produced many lucrative advantages, the ſanction even of *her* friends had been procured to it, he had apparently all that this world could beſtow, and yet he was

evidently unhappy. From ſome expreſſions ſhe was inclined to think he was not eaſy under the breach of his promiſe to her, and that conſcientious ſcruples diſturbed him; though ſhe was not ſatisfied with this reaſon, as deeming it an inadequate one after the voluntary renunciation ſhe had made, it determined her to comply with his requeſt to write to him as ſoon as convenient, and to endeavour in general, without mentioning her ſuſpicions, to ſet his mind perfectly at reſt.

He then was at Nancy in Lorrain, and before the end of the week ſhe ſent him a ſucceinct account of her preſent ſituation, and her future proſpect, and telling him ſhe wiſhed he had been more explicit in his aſſurances that he and Lady Reycolm were completely happy, ſhe tried to perſuade him by repreſenting all things in their beſt light that ſhe herſelf was ſo. In her expreſſions of regard for Lady Reycolm ſhe was very particular, and as earneſtly deſired to hear from her; hoping that ſhe was deceived in ſuppoſing herſelf forgotten, and that the breath of friendſhip might rekindle expiring affection into warmth.

The enſuing week paſſed in a manner exactly correſponding with the firſt day's ſpecimen; Miſs Aiſtrey could not reſt at home; but when ſhe found that Conſtance was not to be prevailed on to follow her example, ſhe ceaſed ſolliciting her, and fulfilled her mother's prophecy by urging, whenever ſhe was invited out, that—mama had Miſs Fitzarthur

to

to ſit with her. This advantage ſerved only to ſhorten entreaty, for though the leaving *mama* at home alone was ſometimes, when *papa* was in particular good humour with his wife, ſtarted as an objection, it always yielded to the deſire of giving Polly *a little pleaſure*. Mrs. Aiſtrey was ſeldom well enough to accept evening engagements; her connections, though numerous, were chiefly in the country, for ſhe never had been ſufficiently happy to enter much into the world; and long before ſhe would have thought it fit to introduce her daughter into company, miſs had ſaved her the trouble. Her time was regularly and rationally ſpent: ſhe roſe early, when her health would permit, amuſed herſelf with her favourite ſtudies till breakfaſt time; then ſettled her family affairs, and afterwards, if Mr. Aiſtrey neither wanted the carriage himſelf nor had promiſed it to his Polly, ſhe went out for an airing, in which Miſs Fitzarthur accompanied her, and which was generally made amuſing and inſtructive by a book; they returned to dreſs for dinner, and Mr. Aiſtrey and his daughter being uniformly engaged for the evening, the two ladies were together; and reading, working, muſic, an occaſional game at piquet, or a ſociable viſit from ſome one of Mrs. Aiſtrey's particular friends, entirely baniſhed ennui.

Conſtance had now paſſed more than a fortnight in this family, of which there was only one member from whoſe ſociety either amuſement or advan-

tage could be drawn. Mrs. Aiſtrey ſaw with concern, which ſhe frequently expreſt, that the dejection of her young friend's ſpirits, notwithſtanding all her efforts, increaſed daily; and ſhe occaſionally intimated an apprehenſion that ſhe had erred in imagining change of ſcene would be beneficial to her: ſhe endeavoured to diſcover from what particular ſource her melancholy originated, but it was too complex to be traced; and not all her encouragement could prevail on Conſtance to ſay what, beſide her family misfortunes, contributed to make her unhappy. Mrs. Aiſtrey perceived it was not the loſs of fortune that moſt affected her, and that though ſhe lamented ſincerely the death of her father, this, as it had now happened near ſix months, could not account for increaſing ſorrow, nor could it be her mother's ſituation that cauſed it, for Lady Barbara had, when ſhe wrote to her, told her it was far more agreeable than ſhe expected, and that her health was mending: what therefore it was that daily gained on Miſs Fitzarthur's mind ſhe could not develope.

Although this benevolent concern of Mrs. Aiſtrey's was apparent to Conſtance, and ſhe ardently wiſhed to relieve her anxiety by telling her what dejected her, yet, ſatisfied as ſhe was that ſhe might with ſafety and advantage to herſelf repoſe this confidence in her, ſhe could not do it. To reveal the cauſe of her unhappineſs would be to impeach Lord Calorne, and from this ſomething within

within reſtrained her: ſhe conſidered it as injuſtice to accuſe thoſe who were not preſent to defend themſelves, and a faint gleam of hope, which vaniſhed as ſoon as inveſtigated, always ſtrengthened her reſolution to ſuffer no one, excepting Lady Barbara, to ſhare with her the knowledge of what ſhe feared muſt be termed decided criminality.

She was in a few days a little cheared by a ſecond letter from her mother who at the ſame time wrote to Mrs. Aiſtrey: A houſe of Lord Drumferne's had become unexpectedly vacant, and was exactly ſuited to Lady Barbara's wiſhes; ſome repairs were neceſſary, and ſhe was to commence tenant at Lady-day; till which time her brother deſired ſhe would ſtay with him: before ſhe accepted the offer ſhe wrote to Mrs. Aiſtrey to know if it would be perfectly convenient that Conſtance ſhould ſo long continue where ſhe was, as otherwiſe ſhe would ſeek for a houſe which ſhe might ſooner inhabit, and to her daughter informing her of the pleaſing proſpect ſhe had in view, and anticipating the delight which, retiring with her to a ſpot ſhe thought ſo eligible, would afford her: ſhe farther, in the courſe of a chearful and amuſing letter, told her what additional reaſons ſhe had to rejoice in their preſent ſeparation: Lord Drumferne had many children and a narrow fortune, and his backwardneſs in his civilities to Lady Barbara he now owned to have ſprung from a fear leſt his ſecond ſon, who was come to reſide at home, and who had often

warmly expreſſed himſelf in commendation of his couſin Fitzarthur, and in diſapprobation of Lord Reycolm's conduct to her, ſhould think of a match which might be very unprofitable to him: Lady Barbara, whoſe ſenſe of honour and deſire to ſpare her brother all uneaſineſs on that point were equal, could not therefore conclude her agreement till ſhe was certain ſhe ſhould not be obliged to have Conſtance with her.

Mrs. Aiſtrey, who had no intention of parting with her viſitor ſo ſoon as Lady-day, immediately accepted the propoſal; and Miſs Fitzarthur was now ſettled in town for the enſuing three months; a ſpace ſhe would have gladly annihilated that ſhe might enjoy her retirement and the tranquillity which ſhe always hoped for, and never found, in change of place: ſhe carried in her boſom what embittered every pleaſure; ſhe was never ſo ſolitary as when in company, nor ſo perturbed as when alone; and nothing afforded her any conſolation but the thought of returning to her mother, and finding her tolerably happy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

RE-ITERATION.

ON her return from walking one morning with Miſs Aiſtrey, Mrs. Aiſtrey told Conſtance ſhe had taken an almoſt unwarrantable liberty by promiſing for her that ſhe ſhould dine out. During her abſence, Mrs. Stavenell, of whoſe being in town her neice was not aware, had called to take her home with her; but as ſhe could not wait her return, Mrs. Aiſtrey had engaged for her, and had ſaid that their coach ſhould carry her and fetch her back in the evening. This unexpected invitation did not much pleaſe Conſtance; ſhe was however obliged to abide by it, and now almoſt repented not having made her kind friend ſo much her confidant as to inform her how matters ſtood with Mrs. Stavenell. Her countenance betrayed what ſhe wiſhed to conceal. I am afraid, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, I have done wrong; but your aunt's firſt queſtion was, Whether you were engaged? and I could not, had I known it was not convenient to you, have avoided it: if there is any thing that prevents your going, ſend one of the men directly.—O no ma'am, Conſtance replied, I have no other engagement:—

Pray did my aunt ſay whether ſhe had any company?—She ſaid, returned Mrs. Aiſtrey, that Mr. Stavenell dined out, and that ſhe ſhould be alone, for I aſked, that you might know how to dreſs.—I am glad to hear Mr. Stavenell is come to England, ſaid Conſtance: you were very obliging to think for me, madam.—I have no objection to going, but really I am ſo unfit to appear in company that I ſhould have been ſorry to have run the riſque of meeting any body there.—She then, tolerably ſatisfied, went to get ready, and Miſs Aiſtrey was ſo polite as to accompany her to Mrs. Stavenell's door.

When ſhe entered the houſe a torrent of painful ideas ruſhed at once on her mind: all the occurrences while ſhe was a gueſt there, all the perſons ſhe had met there roſe to her imagination and her view; and, hurried as ſhe was by various recollections, ſhe was not at all diſpleaſed at hearing that Mrs. Stavenell was not yet returned home, but was expected in a few minutes: theſe few minutes would afford time to the agitation of her mind to ſubſide, and enable her to behave with compoſure.

She had been in the drawing-room a very ſhort time when the door opened, and he, whom of all men ſhe moſt wiſhed to avoid, appeared.—Lord Farnford's countenance declared his meeting her to be accidental; but he was ſo practiſed in the art of deception that the firſt idea which preſented itſelf to her was that it was intentional, and that Mrs.

Stavenell's

Stavenell's invitation was for this purpoſe: terrified at the ſight of him, ſhe for ſome ſeconds ſtood motionleſs, till the ſound of a voice that had ſo often made her tremble brought her to her wits, and taking up her cloak, which ſhe had thrown on a ſopha, ſhe would immediately have quitted the room and the houſe, but Lord Farnford ſeeing her intention ſtood againſt the door, and ſaid—Not ſo, madam, if you leave me it will, I'm ſure, be under the idea that Mrs. Stavenell is privy to my meeting you:—ſhe is not indeed; and if you will hear me, which you may ſafely do, I will convince you that my ſeeing you is entirely accidental, and that I mean to uſe this opportunity only to intreat you to forgive. My Lord, Conſtance interrupted, either you or I muſt leave the room; if my aunt did not mean to afford you this opportunity, *ſhe* will convince me of it; I am ſure ſhe cannot think me too cautious, or be offended at my ſaying I will not ſtay in a houſe where you are:—if you do not intend to drive me away, you will yourſelf withdraw immediately. I will go, he anſwered, but not till I tell you how ſincerely I repent the ſcheme your cruelty and my love forced me to adopt in the ſummer:—if it were poſſible that you could forgive it, my whole life ſhould ſhew the ſenſe I have of your goodneſs and my fault; and would you only allow me to ſee you, whatever conditions you pleaſe to impoſe on me for your ſecurity, I will ſubmit to;—I cannot

bear

bear that you ſhould fly me. Had you, my Lord, returned Conſtance, a proper ſenſe of the injuries I have ſuffered from you, you would know how irkſome it is to me to be in the ſame place with you;—you would be hurt at ſeeing a perſon who has ſuch juſt cauſe to complain of you:—Nothing will aſſure me of your repentance but your leaving the houſe, or ſuffering me to do ſo.

Still the ſame, inexorable Miſs Fitzarthur? ſaid his lordſhip, taking up his hat—how ſuſpicious you are—how unjuſt!—The whole blame of my conduct, replied Conſtance, light on myſelf:—if I am ſuſpicious reflect who gave me reaſon to be ſo. I have only to lament the want of earlier ſuſpicion; had I diſtruſted your lordſhip I had not been expoſed to your inſults. And can you, he aſked, call that inſult which was the conſequence of exceſſive love for you?—I do not mean, ſhe rejoined, to enter into converſation: I repeat again, that unleſs *you* quit the houſe *I* will.——You have, ſaid Lord Farnford, your power over me, and you cruelly exert it to the utmoſt, and force me to leave you without the ſatisfaction of knowing that you accept my repentance;—ſurely when I tear myſelf from you, when I give you this proof of my reſpect for your commands, you cannot withhold your forgiveneſs.——I know not, anſwered Conſtance, whether I can ever forgive your ill uſage; but of this I am fully convinced, that I cannot while my memory is refreſhed by ſeeing your

your lordſhip.——At this inſtant ſhe ſaw Mrs. Stavenell's carriage drive to the door, and was confirmed in her ſuſpicion that Lord Farnford's viſit was a thing concerted, by his not offering to go and gathering confidence.

Mrs. Stavenell entering, expreſſed her aſtoniſhment at ſeeing him, and, addreſſing herſelf to her neice, inquired, in a manner that implied vexation, how long Lord Farnford had been there: he prevented her reply by ſaying, that accidentally calling at her door he was told ſhe was from home, but that Miſs Fitzarthur was juſt come; that he could not reſiſt his inclination to ſee her and beg her forgiveneſs of his paſt conduct; that he could not prevail on her to hear him, and was on the point of quitting her when ſhe ſtopt at the door, which had induced him to ſtay for the purpoſe of explaining this rencontre, and to clear her of what he was ſure Miſs Fitzarthur ſuſpected that he came with her knowledge. Mrs. Stavenell immediately aſſured her neice that ſhe did not merit her ſuſpicion: Conſtance was ſatisfied, and rejoiced at ſeeing Lord Farnford about to take his leave. When he was going, Mrs. Stavenell ſaid to him,—So you're too high and mighty to ſtay and dine with us.—I would not ſtay on any account he replied—I would not make Miſs Fitzarthur ſo uneaſy.—I durſt to ſay, returned Mrs. Stavenell, I can perſuade her, if I promiſe as I won't go out o' the room: and, looking at Conſtance, ſhe continued;

What

What do you ſay, my dear? may I aſk my lord, or muſt I ſend him away :—I'll be bound for his good behaviour.—Heartily vexed at her aunt's want of ſteadineſs, Miſs Fitzarthur emphatically anſwered that ſhe hoped ſhe ſhould never have cauſe to object to what Mrs. Stavenell thought *prudent* to do.——His lordſhip conſtrued this into permiſſion, chucked away his hat, and ſeated himſelf.

Soon after this dinner was announced, and Conſtance with a heavy heart ſaw herſelf once more at the ſame table with Lord Farnford; his mode of behaviour was however calculated to diſpel her fears; he ſeemed to wiſh to forget, and to make her forget that they had ever met before, and by the concluſion of the dinner, Conſtance was ſo far herſelf as to converſe with moderate eaſe. When he perceived this, his reſtraint relaxed; and on their return to the drawing-room he repeated his requeſt to her that ſhe would forgive thoſe circumſtances of his conduct that had offended her, and, in a manner between jeſt and earneſt, with a conſummate and incredible effrontery, which nothing but Miſs Fitzarthur's misfortunes could have accounted for, deſired Mrs. Stavenell to be his interceſſor.—I don't know, ſhe replied, whether I dare or no; though indeed I wiſh monſtrouſly that two young folks, that I love both of them ſo well could agree :—come, my dear Conſty, tell me what penance my lord muſt do :—ſtand in a white ſheet :—come I'll ſee if I can make him do it.—I deſire nothing *of* him ſaid her

her niece; I with only to be ſecure *from* him.—Will you then, interrupted he, eargerly, be ſo generous as to forgive me?—You have a very inadequate ſenſe of the injury I have ſuſtained, Conſtance anſwered, if you think it can be ſo eaſily forgiven: were I ſecure from your future violence, and could I believe you really regretted your cruelty to me, I would endeavour to forget it; but it behoves me to be very cautious, ſince I know you are not to be truſted:—I do not mean to repeat what I have ſuffered from you, yet I muſt ſay I am too fully convinced of your lordſhip's total want of principle and honour, to put myſelf by any conceſſions, in a ſituation where I may again be expoſed to your madneſs.

His anger was awakened by this charge; he denied that he had been guilty of any thing that implied a want either of honour or principle, and now, inſtead of ſupplicating her forgiveneſs, he attempted a vindication of himſelf: his injudiciouſly good friend tried to calm him, ſhe ſaid ſhe cou'dn't bear that two that ſhe hoped would be often at her houſe ſhould harbour malice:—this, ſhe ſaid, muſt not be;—forgive and forget was her rule, each muſt give up a little, and ſhe durſt to ſay they would ſoon be good friends:—come, my dear, ſaid ſhe, you didn't uſe to be ſo uncharitable. I have often heard you preach up forgiveneſs; come practiſe it for once.—Uncharitable, replied Conſtance, I ſhould be very ſorry to be; but ſurely, Madam, you

you cannot think it prudent in me, for the ſake of being thought very charitable, to deſtroy the only fence that preſerves me. I cannot tell what Lord Farnford's intentions are, and I have ſuffered too much to riſque a diſcovery of them :—I have now no friends that he needs fear, no fortune that he can be deſirous of ſecuring. I ſhould hope that my change of circumſtances would remove his inducement to harraſs me, but to this hope he has ſhewn me it would be folly to truſt :—revenge may actuate him now as a pretended paſſion did before. I truſt to your affection for me, Madam, that I ſhall not be deprived of a comfort which I hope, during my life, to enjoy, in the conſideration that, whatever misfortunes it may pleaſe God to afflict me with, they are not the conſequences of my own imprudence, and to this conſolation I ſhould juſtly forfeit all pretenſions, were I again to expoſe myſelf to the inſults I have received :—it behoves me in proportion as my ſituation is leſs ſecure, to increaſe my vigilance.—Lord bleſs me! cried Mrs. Stavenell, you ſeem to think much more of the thing than it deſerves.—I own my lord was wrong, very wrong; and I was very angry with him for frightening you, but you muſt conſider 'twas his love made him guilty of this frolic : young men are ſad creatures. —I durſt to ſay he's very ſorry for it.—Come, come, you muſt and ſhall forgive him ; there is one in the world, my Conſty, that you'd not have been angry with for ſuch a thing, ſo I muſt inſiſt

on

on your forgiving my lord; you know as he's a favourite of mine, and ſo are you, and I will have you make it up, and be friends.

Miſs Fitzarthur could with difficulty repreſs her indignation at hearing ſuch a danger as that ſhe had providentially eſcaped called a *frolic*, and at her aunt's inſinuation that it was the *perſon* only ſhe diſliked: knowing, however, that to ſuffer her anger to appear would be uſeleſs, ſhe thought of coming to terms, and ſaid that there was but one condition on which ſhe would or could forgive Lord Farnford's violence: he and Mrs. Stavenell impatiently waited to hear what this condition was: they ſeemed to believe their victory certain, and their expreſſive looks indicated their exultation in the conqueſt.

They joined in—let us hear it—let us hear it; and Conſtance ſaid that if Lord Farnford would, as far as was poſſible, avoid ſeeing her, and when they did meet, behave to her as a ſtranger, ſhe would forgive all the miſery he had occaſioned her, and that, as nothing elſe would convince her of the ſincerity of his repentance and remove her fears, ſhe would not recede a tittle from her propoſition, nor make any farther conceſſion.

She had ſcarcely ſpoken when his lordſhip, riſing from his ſeat ſuddenly, muttered with an oath—I will not agree to it.—Then turning to Conſtance, he ſaid—I am infinitely obliged to you, madam, for your great condeſcenſion, but I will,

if

if I can got no better terms than theſe, rather riſque the continuance of your diſpleaſure than accept it;—you reproached me with want of honour, I will prove to you how unjuſtly, by refuſing to ſubſcribe to a condition which I do not mean to fulfill.—Could I conſent to what you would impoſe on me, you might well call mine a pretended paſſion; how revengeful you are!—you cannot forgive without puniſhing;—puniſhed I am, and ſhall remain by your obſtinacy; yet that will not ſatisfy your cruelty.——As far, replied Conſtance, as my judgment will direct me, I do no more than is abſolutely neceſſary for my own ſafety:—ſince you think me unreaſonable, I muſt beg to drop the ſubject, much more has been ſaid on it than it deſerves; and, if your lordſhip has the ſenſe of honour you pretend to, I truſt you will not give the world reaſon to imagine that, from my loſs of friends and fortune you are encouraged to harraſs me;—the reſentment of an indigent girl, however excited or expreſſed, can give you no real uneaſineſs.

Mrs. Stavenell, who, ſince her neice had declared the only terms on which Lord Farnford might hope for her forgiveneſs, had ſat ſilent, now taking her hand, led her to the next room; ſhe there expreſſed her ſurprize at her conduct, in a manner evidently declaring how little ſhe was ſatisfied with her reſentment of that which ſhe affected to think, not only a very pardonable fault, but a proof

proof of ſuch a paſſion as demanded a return: and ſhe told her in her uſual ſtyle of oratory, that ſhe was monſtrous fooliſh to make Lord Farnford angry.

Conſtance now finding that Mrs. Stavenell had ſo decidedly taken part with her favourite as to make it equally difficult to deal with both, anſwered,—that ſhe had little to do with fear from Lord Farnford's reſentment, but ſhe could never think herſelf ſafe if opportunities of ſeeing her were afforded him by thoſe who ſhe imagined would have been as much offended as herſelf at his outrageous attempt: as therefore ſhe was left unfriended at her own guidance, ſhe hoped ſhe could not be blamed if ſhe erred in being exceſſively cautious: none, ſhe ſaid, except thoſe who had been in a ſimilar ſituation, could judge of the propriety of her firmneſs. Mrs. Stavenell ſeemed to feel the reproach conveyed in her reply: ſhe told her with ſome aſperity, that ſhe was blind to the danger of making Lord Farnford her enemy:—ſurely as ſhe ſtood now, it would be folly to do it, for he would never think of her again if ſhe was ſo obſtinate.

Till now, Conſtance had imagined that it was on account of her *ſafety* that her aunt dreaded his reſentment; but perceiving that her fear was that ſhe ſhould looſe him forever, ſhe rejoiced that ſhe had not, through a miſtaken lenity, thrown down the only barrier between them; and as ſhe ſuppoſed whatever ſhe ſaid would be reported to him, ſhe

ſhe in the moſt deciſive manner declared that, notwithſtanding the loſs of her fortune, her conduct ſhould be what it ever had been:—her poverty, ſhe ſaid, could not leſſen her diſlike to him, nor was ſhe ſo mercenary as to think his riches, titles, and honours a ſufficient reward for marrying a man ſhe hated;—her duty to herſelf taught her to avoid him, and her inclination perfectly concurred with her duty, ſince ſhe never could ſee him without a renewal of the moſt painful ideas; and he had ſo fixedly planted diſtruſt in her mind that ſhe could not think herſelf ſafe in the ſame houſe with him: for which reaſon, ſhe continued, ſhe muſt beg her aunt to forbear inviting her, unleſs it was in her power to aſſure her that Lord Farnford ſhould not be admitted during her ſtay.

Mrs. Stavenell affected to think her leſs in earneſt than ſhe really was; and, to make Conſtance believe ſhe knew her heart better than its owner did, ſhe told her ſhe could not bear to ſee people refuſe what every body knew they would be pleaſed with. I, ſaid ſhe riſing, for my part have nothing at all to do with it: I don't want to perſuade you:—you think worſe of my lord than he deſerves, and you're to take your own way; as you make your bed ſo you muſt lay on it:—you know what I think, and I'm ſure that if my lord will make you another offer you'll be your own enemy if you don't ſtrike it: as your affairs are you have very little to live on, and you'll be wrong to refuſe him.—She

ſhewed

ſhewed Conſtance there was no neceſſity for a reply, by returning to the room they had quitted, whither ſhe followed her.—Well, ſaid Lord Farnford to his advocate, I truſt you have been pleading my cauſe—how have you ſucceeded? have you perſuaded Miſs Fitzarthur to enlarge the bounds of her charity, and reſtore me to her favour?—No, anſwered Mrs. Stavenell, I can't brag; you muſt try what you can do.

Teazed and wearied with ſuch unremitting perſecution, Conſtance began to think of leaving the houſe abruptly, chuſing rather to ſuffer her aunt's diſpleaſure than to be expoſed to Lord Farnford's effrontery, which every minute gained ground; ſhe had juſt determined to make an excuſe out of the room, of ſpeaking to the ſervant who had waited on her while ſhe was with Mrs. Stavenell, and then to ſend for a hackney-coach, when Mr. Stavenell came in and relieved her. The joy ſhe felt at ſeeing him after ſo long an abſence was increaſed by the protection his preſence afforded her: he addreſſed himſelf to his couſin, and with the ſame degree of intereſt and affection he had ever expreſſed for her, told her he had left his company for the hope of ſeeing her, and excuſed his not having called on her by his abſence from town. His behaviour to Lord Farnford, Conſtance obſerved with pleaſure was very cool; he ſcarcely ſpoke to him, and when he did, it was in a way calculated to repreſs his lordſhip's natural aſſurance.

assurance. He seemed to collect from the party that her visit had not been very agreeable to her, and said emphatically that, had he known what he then did, he would have dined at home; this was construed by his mother to mean that the company he had left were not such as he liked, and Lord Farnford began to inquire who they were. Seeing that Constance understood him, he did not explain himself, but suffered them to remain in their error.

The subject which had so long distressed Miss Fitzarthur was now of necessity dropped, and Lord Farnford's presence, while she had the support of Mr. Stavenell, gave her no uneasiness. Mr. Aistrey's coach was to be with her at nine, and as Mr. Stavenell was not called away, she was not impatient; at a few minutes past nine she heard the carriage come, and a thundering rap made her rise and take her cloak hastily, as she imagined some of the family might have fetched her. She had taken leave of Mrs. Stavenell, and was waiting for the servant to tell her the coach was come, when the door was thrown open, and in bounced Miss Aistrey. As she was a total stranger there, Constance was vexed at the intrusion, which miss did not think it necessary to excuse, but, with a familiarity which is in others the result of a long and intimate acquaintance, seated herself, and seemed to have forgotten that she came only to call Constance: she sat next to Lord Farnford, who soon affected to be deeply engaged in conversation with her

her, evidently hoping to excite Miſs Fitzarthur's jealouſy; an effect which it ſo failed of, that ſhe gladly improved the interval in talking in a low voice to Mr. Stavenell, as it was impoſſible to ſay much that they did not wiſh the reſt of the company to hear, he, after having told his couſin that he was ſorry to ſee who completed the triumvirate, and aſſured her ſhe might depend on every ſervice in his power, aſked her if he might call on her the next day; to this ſhe gladly aſſented, and he promiſed to be with her in the morning. She then reminded Miſs Aiſtrey that the carriage was come; but ſhe could not detach her from Lord Farnford, and it was not till ſhe ſaid ſhe could not keep the ſervants who were ſent for her, waiting, that the young lady roſe; her newly acquired beau inſiſted on attending her down ſtairs, and parted from them taking very little notice of Conſtance, whom Mr. Stavenell handed to the coach. All the way home Miſs Aiſtrey ſung the praiſes of Lord Farnford; he was the moſt agreeable, the moſt elegant, the moſt charming, the politeſt man ſhe had ever ſeen; and to the no trifling mortification of her whom he more ſeriouſly regarded, ſhe ſaid that ſhe had invited him to viſit at her father's, and that he had engaged to come ſhortly.—Surely, replied Conſtance, you are not in earneſt! you did not aſk him, did you?—I did, upon honour, returned prudent Miſs Aiſtrey, I'm ſure papa will like him. The wiſdom of ſuch conduct afforded Conſtance ſo much

ſubject of ſpeculation that ſhe did not attend to an inceſſant eulogium on his lordſhip; and no diſtance ever ſeemed ſo great to her as that between Spring Garden and Bedford Row.

CHAP. XIV.

CONFABULATION.

AS ſoon as Miſs Fitzarthur got home ſhe retired to her room and paſſed the night in conſidering how ſhe might avert the evils with which ſhe was threatened. Mrs. Stavenell's undiminiſhed partiality for Lord Farnford, as ſhe knew how eaſily ſhe was wrought on by thoſe who had gained an aſcendancy over her, alarmed her; and ſhe reſolved that her viſits there ſhould not be more frequent than was neceſſary to prevent a breach: yet to what purpoſe this caution? ſince Miſs Aiſtrey's imprudent vanity had expoſed her, where ſhe was, to Lord Farnford's importunity. Her inclination ſtrongly prompted her to warn this thoughtleſs young woman of the danger of admitting ſuch

a man to any degree of intimacy; but ſhe knew her ſhe meant to adviſe ſufficiently, to believe ſhe would either deſpiſe her caution and communicate it, or attribute it to jealouſy: to tell Mrs. Aiſtrey what was to be feared ſeemed to be the more eligible plan; and this ſhe would have adopted, had ſhe not been apprehenſive that ſhe might embarraſs herſelf without being able to exculpate her conduct; ſhe muſt ſupport her aſſertion that all connection with Lord Farnford was dangerous, and this could no way be done, ſo as to gain credit, except by revealing the circumſtances of what Mrs. Stavenell kindly named his *frolic*, which it afforded her ſome ſatisfaction to find, her injunctions to thoſe who had aſſiſted her, had prevented from becoming public; however ſhe related the particulars, and however blameleſs ſhe was, the ſtory would, ſhe foreſaw, make againſt her; and though Mrs. Aiſtrey's regard for her appeared great, ſhe could not wiſh that her credulity ſhould precede her judgment: the hazard of having her veracity queſtioned, and her inability to prove what ſhe advanced, deterred her from purſuing this ſcheme, and ſhe could not hit on any ſhe liked better. Thus far with reſpect to Miſs Aiſtrey: for herſelf ſhe knew not what to do; ſhe thought her remaining in town impoſſible, and yet ſhe was very averſe to inform her mother of what had happened, as that muſt be followed by her becoming, not only an uninvited, but an un-

welcome gueſt at her uncle's, or diſtreſſing Lady Barbara extremely. Unable to reſolve on any thing, anxious for the conſequences of this injudicious invitation, and terrified leaſt Lord Farnford ſhould make uſe of the opportunity offered him, to ſolicit her, ſhe roſe more fatigued than ſhe lay down, and waited impatiently for Mr. Stavenell's coming.

When ſhe obeyed the ſummons to breakfaſt, her countenance betrayed her want of reſt. Mrs. Aiſtrey's diſcernment ſoon taught her that Conſtance's was no common indiſpoſition; ſhe therefore after having kindly enquired after her health, forbore ſaying any more, and as far as was in her power, prevented her daughter's inquiſitiveneſs. During breakfaſt Mr. Aiſtrey ſaid to Miſs Fitzarthur—So, Polly tells me you had a very ſmart young gentleman at your aunt's laſt night;—Lord Farnford I think ſhe ſays:—he promiſed to come and eat a bit of mutton with us:—pray, Miſs, do you know any thing about him?—Yes, replied Conſtance, whoſe colour roſe at the mention of his name, he is very frequently at my aunt's.—And pray, continued he, what ſort of a man is he? is he one of your harum ſtarum fine fellows that you ſee at the opera?—I can hardly, Sir, anſwer your queſtion, ſhe returned; he is a man of high faſhion, if that is what you wiſh to know.—And pray ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, What may his eſtate be?—She replied that ſhe had heard it was 25,000l. a year.

year.—Aye, cried her interrogator, that's a round ſum to talk of; pray how much of it's dipt?—tell me that if you can:—I ſhould be glad to know that.—Conſtance anſwered that ſhe knew very little of the ſtate of his finances, that he was generally underſtood to be rich, and that, his father dying when the preſent earl was very young, the eſtate had increaſed conſiderably during his minority. Aye, aye, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, rubbing his hands, your long minorities are nice things;—they patch holes charmingly:—then when my young gentleman comes of age, he ſpends ten times as faſt as his guardians could ſave, and then whip he's run through all in a couple of years, and what's the wife and children to do?—Don't miſtake me though:—I don't mean to ſay my lord what's his name is ſuch a one; I only mean to ſay what young fellows are in the mult.—He may deſerve your cenſure, ſaid Conſtance, I have not known him long enough to know all his faults.——Pray, interpoſed Miſs Aiſtrey gravely, how long have you known him?—About a year, was the anſwer; at which ſhe ſeemed much ſurprized: ſhe ſaid ſhe took him for a ſtranger, for that he did not ſpeak to Miſs Fitzarthur all the while ſhe was in the room.—— Conſtance coloured higher than before; but fearing a miſconſtruction of her ſilence, ſhe ſaid they had been previouſly talking together, and that afterwards ſhe was engaged with Mr. Stavenell. Mrs Aiſtrey's eyes were fixed on her viſitor,

while miſs, as if purpoſely to diſtreſs her, repeated her expreſſions of wonder, till her father, nodding ſignificantly at her, bid her hold her tongue, for that ſhe might ſee this was a ſore place. Increaſing confuſion ſeemed to confirm the diſcovery, and the moſt perplexing ſilence imaginable enſued. Conſtance ſaw the eyes of thoſe who had witneſſed her embarraſſment directed to her, and it was not difficult to gueſs what conſtruction would be put on it, yet ſhe was unable to ſay any thing that might account for it, for of all people in the world ſhe could ſcarcely have choſen two leſs fit to be entruſted with her confidence, or who had in a ſmaller degree the power of exerciſing impartial judgment, than Mr. Aiſtrey and his Polly.

While breakfaſt laſted, Mrs. Aiſtrey diverted the converſation to indifferent ſubjects, and they were riſing to ſeparate when a ſervant came in, with a card containing Lord Farnford's compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Aiſtrey, Miſs Fitzarthur, and Miſs Aiſtrey, and an intimation that he would do himſelf the honour of waiting on them in the evening. So, ſaid the old gentleman on reading it, why Polly my lord's vaſtly kind; we're not engaged, are we?—Not particularly cried pretty Polly, we ſhall be very happy to have the honour of his lordſhip's company.——On this Mrs. Aiſtrey turned to Conſtance, who had got behind her to hide her vexation, and aſked if *ſhe* had any other engagement, for that as her name was mentioned it ought

to

to be returned; but ſhe, now as pale as death, only ſhook her head, and her kind friend took her out of the room. They went together to the dreſſing-room, and having made her ſit down, when ſhe grew more compoſed, Mrs. Aiſtrey, in a voice and manner tending to re-animate her, ſaid,—When Lady Barbara committed you, my dear, to my care, I am ſure ſhe did it in the fulleſt aſſurance that I would exerciſe the ſame degree of it towards you as if you were my daughter:—I ſhould be unworthy that confidence if I did leſs than this: the obligation it implies, and my affection for you, equally ſtimulate me to the performance of this duty: I will therefore riſque the imputation of unwarrantable curioſity, and beg you to tell me the cauſe of your violent agitation:—I ſee I diſtreſs you, I am ſorry for:—if it is any thing you wiſh to conceal, I will not urge you:—tell me only whether it is in my power to relieve you. I ſhall not be offended at your want of reliance on me, if you can direct me to any means of removing what oppreſſes you.—I cannot ſee one for whom I am ſo ſincerely intereſted, ſuffering thus, without exerting myſelf to alleviate whatever may be the cauſe of it.

Though Mrs. Aiſtrey's kindne s encouraged her young friend to confidence, her maternal care inſpired her with ſuch ſentiments of reſpect and awe as made her fear diſcloſing the real cauſe of her uneaſineſs, ſhe dreaded the conſtruction that might be put on her leaving London with Lord

Farnford, and conſidering that the whole of her reputation depended on her being able to convince others of that which ſhe had no evidence of, ſhe remained ſilent and diſtreſſed, with her eyes riveted to the ground :—Mrs. Aiſtrey roſe, and ſaying,—I am ſorry, my dear Miſs Fitzarthur, that I have embarraſſed you: another time perhaps may better ſuit you to anſwer me; was about to quit the room, when Conſtance, catching her hand, ſtopt her, and burſt into tears: as ſoon as ſhe could ſpeak, ſhe ſaid,—Do not think, my dear madam, that I want confidence in you,—it is my own want of fortitude. —My love, interrupted Mrs. Aiſtrey, I meant only to relieve you: if it would be painful to you to tell me what afflicts you, I inſiſt on your ſtill keeping it ſecret.—O no, anſwered Conſtance, I do not wiſh to keep it from you :—I will tell you all: you may blame me, but you muſt not think I want confidence in you :—I wiſh any body elſe could tell you.—I would willingly, anſwered Mrs. Aiſtrey, ſpare you as much as poſſible.—I believe I am not wholly ignorant of what it is, and, to ſave you, will tell you all that I ſuſpect.

Here ſhe pauſed, as if to ſee the effect of what ſhe had ſaid: Conſtance continued ſilent, and ſhe proceeded :—Ever ſince you came to us, I have remarked that your melancholy has increaſed, and that when you join in the converſation, or appear moderately chearful, ſuch an exertion is required as ſoon exauſts you: I have been totally at a loſs to account

account for this, and perhaps ſhould never have accounted for it, had I not this morning obſerved that you was particularly agitated whenever Lord Farnford was mentioned:—your colour came and went every moment, and it was evident to me that he was the cauſe of your emotion, and I conclude he is of your dejection:—I therefore imagine that, either you are unfortunately attached to him and your regard is not returned, or that there is a reciprocal affection between you which prudential reaſons obſtruct:—my deareſt girl will forgive me for ſaying I hope he is not ſuch a man as to occaſion any ſtruggle between honour and affection; if that ſhould be the caſe, though I am ſatisfied my interference is unneceſſary to direct her to which ſide ſhe ſhould incline, it may not be out of my power to aſſiſt her by encouraging her.

It was new incumbent on Conſtance to ſet her affectionate monitor right; ſhe determined to make her acquainted with the whole of Lord Farnford's conduct, and to tell her what ſhe had to fear from him and from Mrs. Stavenell's partiality. She began by ſaying that as to the perſon who was the cauſe of her agitation Mrs. Aiſtrey was not miſtaken,—I have every thing, ſaid ſhe, to fear from him; he keeps me in continual alarm, and I ſometimes diſtruſt my ability to reſiſt his ceaſeleſs importunity; but from your kindneſs, madam, I ſhall derive new ſtrength, and I truſt to your protection.——At this inſtant, in ran Miſs Aiſtrey:—

Lord a mercy! ſhe exclaimed, where have you been poking yourſelves? I have been hunting you this age:—why, what's the matter?—Miſs Fitzarthur's been a crying:—come, your couſin Mr. Stavenell is below, he wants to ſpeak to you.—— Conſtance ſaid ſhe would follow her, intending to ſay a few more words to Mrs. Aiſtrey; but miſs would not go without her, and dancing like a bacchanal, and ſinging, *O the days when I was young*! —ſhe drove her before her to the parlour, where Mr. Stavenell was; Mr. Aiſtrey was likewiſe there, and Conſtance every minute expected that he and his daughter would withdraw: Mr. Stavenell gave them ſeveral hints that he was come on private buſineſs; but they ſtood them all: at length, after waiting full half an hour, he aſked Conſtance if ſhe would take a walk with him: ſhe underſtood him and conſented. As ſoon as this was propoſed, Let's all go, cries miſs, it will be very pleaſant, only ſtay while I dreſs a little.—Really ſaid Conſtance, our time is ſo circumſcribed we cannot well wait;—O then I'll be ready as ſoon as you are, anſwered Miſs Aiſtrey, and away ſhe ran up ſtairs. ——Miſs Fitzarthur immediately went to her mother, told her how ſhe diſtreſſed her, and begged her to let Miſs Aiſtrey know that Mr. Stavenell came on buſineſs, and that her going would be improper.—I will take her off your hands replied Mrs. Aiſtrey, I am going out this morning where ſhe will like to go, and if I tell her you will ſtay out

till

till I am gone, ſhe will give up walking;—ſhe did as ſhe promiſed, her daughter acquieſced, and Conſtance and her couſin went out without her.

When they were alone, Miſs Fitzarthur told Mr. Stavenell of the meſſage Lord Farnford had ſent.—I knew, he replied, he would do ſo; for I heard your wiſe companion invite him; but, added he, before I ſay any thing about Lord Farnford, I muſt know how you ſtand affected to him.——Can that, Conſtance aſked, be a queſtion with you?—has not my conduct been uniform towards him?—do you think I am changed?—or that what he has made me undergo has mended my opinion of him?—I ſuppoſe you have heard of the trap he laid for me.

It was told me, ſaid he, as a very good ſtory and a frolic;—I own I ſaw it in a more ſerious light; but as you have very prudently prevented its becoming public, I never chuſe to ſay much to it.—I hope you *are* unchanged, and that your ſentiments are, not only what they were, but what I wiſh them to be, yet my mother ſo confidently inſiſts on it that you are not ſincere, that I know not what to think.——My aunt, replied Conſtance, is ſo much Lord Farnford's friend, that ſhe almoſt, I was going to ſay, forgets I am her neice; nothing, except her exceſſive partiality for him, and her conſequent wiſh to extenuate all his faults, could account for her diſbelief of my ſincerity.—It is not, anſwered her ſon, wholly owing to her partiality

for *him*, I really think it is occaſioned as much by her affection for you, and a deſire to promote your intereſt—however erroneous her judgment may be, I will give her credit for the goodneſs of her intention; and as, you are well aware, ſhe has not the niceſt feelings, ſhe thinks your marrying Lord Farnford would be ſo advantageous to you, that all other conſiderations ought to be forgotten: now therefore tell me ingenuouſly whether in your preſent precarious ſituation, his title and fortune will not ſooner or later prevail on you to yield, this you certainly may believe of him, that he loves you ſincerely; and it will ſecure you from many evils; and now, putting all together, tell me, as your final determination, whether the want of affection for him is an inſurmountable obſtacle: on your anſwer the whole of my conduct with regard to your affairs will be founded: I will not allow you to recede from what you ſhall ſay; ſo be cautious, and weigh all the advantages of accepting, and the probable conſequences of refuſing, before you reſolve. I hope, ſaid Conſtance, I am not in danger of his making me another offer; all he ſolicits is my forgiveneſs.

How imperfectly, replied her couſin, do you underſtand Farnford! you do not know it is his firſt principle never to give up what he has once purſued.—I know that trait in his character, ſhe returned, and though he did, immediately after my poor father's death, repeat what he had propoſed,

yet I think, on cooler reflection, his pride would oppoſe him: the ſubject of his purſuit may be rendered unworthy of it; it may be ſo totally deprived of all that gave it value, as to force him to relinquiſh it.—Do not truſt to this hope, ſaid Mr. Stavenell, avarice is not in the catalogue of his vices and you may depend on it that, if he meant to give you up, he would not have thought your pardon worth aſking; he would have been very well ſatisfied with having ſuch a barrier between you and him; and to ſhew you that he cannot be charged with inconſtancy, I can, on my own knowledge, aſſure you that not many days ago he ſaid, when you were the ſubject of converſation, and my mother offered to venture a wager that, notwithſtanding all the circumſtances of your ſituation, you would be married in leſs than a twelvemonth, he anſwered, by ſwearing ſolemnly, that whoever dared to addreſs you ſhould fight him:—he ſaid you were his property, and he would not be robbed; but even ſuppoſing he ſhould change his reſolution, it can do you no harm to tell me what, in caſe he again aſk you, you will do.—That I will very readily, returned Miſs Fitzarthur, on condition you believe me ſincere and firm:—I religiouſly proteſt that were Lord Farnford's rank and fortune ten times what they are, and were my ſituation ſtill lower than it is, I would reject all his offers; for that which is urged to me as an argument for, is with me a diſſuaſive from accepting them; I ſhould

be miſerable with ſuch a man, and the more exalted I was, the more unhappy I ſhould be. Good God! to be forced to be a witneſs to drunkenneſs and riot! to ſit at table with him and his libertine companions! and hear the repetition of oaths and curſes, and perhaps in a few months to be ſlighted for ſome abandoned creature who would take pleaſure in inſulting me! are theſe temptations? and I declare without exaggeration it is not the worſt I ſhould expect.—How much conſolation would money that I could not enjoy, and a coronet ſo loaded, afford me:—Yet I muſt comfort myſelf that I was a counteſs; for I ſhould have little elſe to look to in this world.

This explicit declaration pleaſed Mr. Stavenell, he owned what ſhe ſaid juſt, obſerving how much farther her miſery might be increaſed, applauded her reſolution, and promiſed her all poſſible aſſiſtance. However firm, ſaid Conſtance, I may be, I cannot anſwer for myſelf if I am to be continually expoſed to Lord Farnford's viſits, and if my aunt gives him opportunities of ſeeing me:—I know not what means he may make uſe of, and I may be forced to conſent while my ſentiments of him remain juſt what they are now.—You have, I hope, little to fear, Mr. Stavenell anſwered,—your prudence will keep him at a diſtance, and, if you perſevere, he muſt yield.—You will avoid as much as you can being in his company; but I would not have you, if he ſhould unexpectedly come in, fly

him

him: that would encourage him, as he would know you diſtruſted your own fortitude. In all your behaviour let him ſee you are reſolved, and you will weary him.

After thanking him for his advice, and promiſing to follow it, Conſtance aſked Mr. Stavenell his opinion of the propriety of her remaining at Mrs. Aiſtrey's: ſhe told him candidly all her difficulty; he preferred her ſtaying where ſhe was, and acquainting Mrs. Aiſtrey with Lord Farnford's purſuits; by which ſhe would ſecure a protection equivalent to that of her mother. As it was almoſt impoſſible that ſhe ſhould do this before his lordſhip came, her couſin propoſed her going in diſhabille with him to the play; ſhe conſented, on condition ſhe might ſit where ſhe was not in danger of being known, hoping that from her abſence Lord Farnford would collect that *ſhe* did not mean to receive his viſits; and at leaſt, if it had no other good effect, it would free her from an embarraſſing ſituation.

They had juſt ſettled their plan when they reached home: the family were all out, and Mr. Stavenell ſat down with Conſtance. There was a ſubject on which ſhe wiſhed much to ſpeak to him, and yet ſhe did not dare to introduce it, not knowing how it might affect him; but he ſoon gratified her by ſtarting it himſelf: this was Lady Reycolm, of whom ſhe was deſirous of learning ſomething. It gave her great pleaſure to perceive that he had got over his attachment to her entirely; he laughed at the

the folly of his paſſion, and at the difficulty he had in getting rid of her, and concluded with ſaying it was madneſs for a man who was profeſſionally a rambler to think of marrying:—he obſerved that if he married a deſerving woman he ſhould be perpetually unhappy in his abſence from her; and if he married any other, all the joy of returning home was embittered. Conſtance however learnt that he kept up no correſpondence with Lord Reycolm, and that he knew no more of them than ſhe did: ſhe forbore ſpeaking of the omiſſion in her letter, as perhaps it was accidental, and ſhe feared magnifying it into ſomething ſerious.—When ſhe found that there was no danger of exiting painful remembrances, ſhe acknowledged to Mr. Stavenell that his magnanimity exceeded her expectations.—There is nothing wonderful in it, he replied, ſhe's married, and I can't have her, without knocking her huſband on the head, and that is too much trouble, for, entre nous, ſhe is not worth a vaſt deal of pains; ſhe has many recommendations, but ſhe did not behave well; ſhe ought not to have heſitated. I wiſh her huſband may be happy with her, and in all probability he will, if ſhe has prudence enough to hold her tongue, and not, if he does any thing to diſpleaſe her, tell him, if it had not been for me ſhe would not have had him.—You ſee that, with ſuch an opinion of her, my overcoming a ſhort liv'd paſſion was not miraculous; though you ſeem to admire it in me, I will ſtake my credit

you

would do the ſame:—you could hear Lord Calorne ſpoken of without any change in your countenance.—Appearances inſtantaneouſly contradicting him, he continued ſeriouſly:—I beg your pardon for making the experiment:—I did not know it could have ſuch an effect; but I will atone for it by aſſiſting you in overcoming as I have done:—you muſt not think of him.—I do not wonder at your attachment to him;—he is, however indiſpenſibly obliged to marry Miſs Ecklow, though I really believe it is againſt his inclination.—I was told of your penchant for him, and hoped things would turn out better.—All I know of him is from hearſay, for he has dropped me, I ſuppoſe wiſhing, as he ought, to forget you.—The tears ſtarted into Conſtance's eyes, ſhe promiſed to exert herſelf to follow Mr. Stavenell's example, and he, perceiving that the doſe he had given her was quite as ſtrong as ſhe could bear, ſoon quitted her.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

INQUISITIVENESS.

CONSTANCE could not get a private audience of Mrs. Aiſtrey before dinner, but when they all met ſhe mentioned her engagement for the evening.—Why, Miſs Fitzarthur! ſaid Miſs Aiſtrey ſtaring with ſurprize, I thought you had vowed you would not appear in public.—pray what's the play that you've changed your mind?—Upon my word, replied Conſtance, I do not know; I forgot to aſk Mr. Stavenell.—I dare ſay then, returned miſs, it's the ſame to you whether you go to night or to-morrow; if you'd put it off, I'd go with you then; beſide Lord Farnford comes to night, you did not recollect that.—It is too late now, Conſtance anſwered, I have promiſed my couſin, and I would not on any conſideration diſappoint him: Lord Farnford's viſit is to your family, not to me.——Mrs. Aiſtrey on this interfered, and deſired Miſs Fitzarthur might be permitted to follow her own inclination.—Well, ſaid her huſband, I'll tell you what I'll ſay to my lord: I'll ſay, my lord, Miſs Fitzarthur went to the play becauſe you was coming: If you pleaſe, ſhe replied,

plied, wiſhing rather that he would tell him ſo,—I will ſtand his anger.

Soon after dinner, Mr. Stavenell came to take Conſtance, who, not becauſe ſhe expected gratification from the amuſement, but becauſe ſhe hoped to avoid pain, rejoiced at leaving the houſe: ſhe returned about half paſt eleven, and going to the drawing-room, to her inexpreſſible mortification found Lord Farnford ſtill there: as he came only for a tea-viſit, ſhe had no idea of his ſtaying ſo long, and therefore had made no inquiries of the ſervant. Her averſion to him, and her dread of what ſhe might ſuffer, prompted her to retire as ſoon as ſhe ſaw him, till recollecting Mr. Stavenell's advice not to encourage his purſuit by flying from him, ſhe again advanced. The company, excluſive of the family, conſiſted only of Lord Farnford and Captain Berneil, who were engaged with Mr. Aiſtrey and his daughter at a whiſt table: Mrs. Aiſtrey ſat out, and by her Conſtance ſeated herſelf. Nothing more than the uſual compliments paſſed till the party roſe and Captain Berneil went away, which was in a few minutes after ſhe came in: then Mr. Aiſtrey, running up to her, ſaid:—well I told my lord you know what, and what do you think my lord told me.—I ſuppoſe, replied Conſtance, ſtriving to appear at eaſe, he ſaid I was very rude.—No, he did not, returned Mr. Aiſtrey; he ſaid if that was true he'd be up with you, for he would not ſtir till you came home.—I am ſorry,

ſhe

ſhe anſwered, that I ſhould be the occaſion of detaining his lordſhip here.—In ſeeing you, madam, he replied bowing obſequiouſly, I am amply repaid:—I wait to hear you contradict what Mr. Aiſtrey told me.—She ſaid nothing; but Lord Farnford, to make her ſpeak, repeated his expectation.—Contradict me, miſs, cried Mr. Aiſtrey, and I'll tell my Lord about you at breakfaſt.

It was now her intereſt to keep fair, if poſſible, with both, and this was not eaſily to be done; ſhe could not deny that ſhe went from home to avoid Lord Farnford, and even if ſhe could have done it, in any way ſhort of falſity, ſhe expoſed herſelf to whatever Mr. Aiſtrey might chuſe to reveal; and, that if ſhe confeſſed that what he had aſſerted was true, ſhe muſt, by ſome means or other, juſtify an incivility which ſhe avowed to be intentional: ſhe therefore endeavoured to eſcape by ſaying that though ſhe would not be ſo rude as to contradict any body, all the family knew that her going to the play was in conſequence of Mr. Stavenell's invitation.——Well, interrupted Miſs Aiſtrey, I'm ſure you was'nt engaged this morning when my lord ſent:—you woudn't have been ſo flurried if you hadn't thought you ſhould have ſeen him,—Well done, Polly, replied her father:—aye, my lord, we all ſee which way the wind blew when your man came; I ſaid 'twas a ſore place, but the fly thing has a mind to try your metal; ſhe runs away only to ſee if you'll follow: aye, aye, that's always

ways been the way with the girls ever ſince I have known 'em, and I dare ſay, my lord, you've always found it ſo.—While he was ſpeaking, Conſtance affected not to pay any attention to him, and ſhe talked to Mrs. Aiſtrey moſt earneſtly on nothing, leaſt Lord Farnford ſhould interpret her confuſion to his advantage.—Aye, aye, continued the facetious gentleman, in the ſame ſtrain of jocularity, ſhe won't hear;—I underſtand her cunning, my lord, you muſt ſpeak yourſelf:—may be the poor thing's baſhful before company, I always thought ſhe was ſhy.

Conſtance could no longer bear ſuch coarſe raillery, which was encouraged by the pleaſure it ſeemed to afford Lord Farnford: ſhe told Mr. Aiſtrey that the conſtructions he put on her words and actions were equally erroneous, and in a low voice ſaid to Mrs. Aiſtrey, that ſhe muſt leave the room for ſhe could not ſit it; when his lordſhip rang for his carriage. Mr. Aiſtrey preſſed him to ſtay, and Polly joined him; but he was fortunately engaged to ſupper: he bowed to the ladies, and then coming up to Miſs Fitzarthur, with that confident aſſurance that marked his character, he took from his pocket a letter which he offered her and ſhe refuſed to accept: he then ſaid, in a tone of haughtineſs mixed with ironical ſubmiſſion, If you will condeſcend, madam, to look at the outſide only, you will perceive there is no danger; ſhe glanced at it as he held it in his hand, and ſeeing it was

Mrs.

Mrs. Stavenell's writing, without ſpeaking took it. As he was going, Mr. Aiſtrey intreated he might have the honour of another viſit, which his lordſhip with the moſt affable goodneſs, very readily promiſed,—I gueſs, ſaid hoſpitable Mr. Aiſtrey, pointing over his ſhoulder to Conſtance, while we can keep her we may hope for a call now and then, and mind, don't you be diſheartened; if ſhe won't ſpeak, I'll ſpeak for her,—I know what ſhe would ſay better than ſhe does herſelf—Lord Farnford again promiſed to uſe the liberty allowed him, and went away.

Conſtance afterwards tried to convince Mr. Aiſtrey of his error: but, as ſhe could do this no otherwiſe than by denying any attachment to Lord Farnford, he placed it all to the account of hypocriſy; and declared that if ſhe talked till doomſday he would not believe any young woman could be in earneſt in proteſting ſhe was indifferent to ſuch a man: in this ſentiment his daughter moſt heartily concurred. It was in vain to contend with folly and prejudice, ſhe therefore ſaid ſhe ſhould leave it to time to diſcover her ſincerity.

As ſhe was not in a diſpoſition to enjoy the ebullitions of Mr. Aiſtrey's wit, and he ſeemed too well pleaſed with them to check it, under pretence of fatigue ſhe retired to her room, when the family went to ſupper.—When ſhe was going out of the parlour, Mr. Aiſtrey called to her,—Remember to read your letter: do you think it will be a compoſ-

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ing draught, or won't it disturb your rest?—If I may judge, she answered, by knowing whence it comes it will, I believe, be neither.—Why, it comes from him that brought it, said Mr. Aistrey.—You are mistaken, sir, returned she, it comes from my aunt: I suppose she sent it by Lord Farnford.—O you sly baggage! cried he,—you can't take me in; I know better: you'r deadly sly.——Piqued at having her veracity thus questioned, she came back to the table, and opened her letter, intending to convince Mr. Aistrey by the signature that he was deceived; but what could exceed her mortification and distress when she found that it was she who was deceived, for it was actually written and signed by Lord Farnford, nothing more than the superscription being Mrs. Stavenell's: she immediately, without reading it, twisted it up, and lighted one end of it at the candle, threw it within the hearth, while Mr. Aistrey, who had peeped over her shoulder and seen the name, in the ardour of exultation was clapping his hands, and wishing he had laid a bottle of wine on it.

In going up stairs, her candle blew out; and being alone, she returned, not very willingly, to the parlour to light it: at the moment of her opening the door, she heard Mrs. Aistrey say;—Now, Mary, you are rightly served:—you deserved to be punished for your impertinent curiosity:—I am glad, Miss Fitzarthur, you are come back, for your letter has been rescued from the flames, and

my

my daughter has gratified a moſt unpardonable inquiſitiveneſs by reading it.—If I had known, replied Conſtance calmly, that Miſs Aiſtrey wiſhed to be informed of the contents, I would have ſhewn it to her; but I muſt beg to have it reſtored to me; I did not read it myſelf, and ſhould be very ſorry to have it preſerved.—This requeſt Miſs Aiſtrey complied with, by producing it from behind her, while her countenance exactly repreſented the traits of a little mind. Conſtance again ſet the paper on fire, and when ſhe had ſeen it entirely conſumed, retired, more vexed than ever with the father and daughter, and wiſhing earneſtly to ſpeak in private to Mrs. Aiſtrey, as ſhe knew not what the letter contained, or how much of it required explanation to clear her of ſuſpicion.

It was with no ſmall reluctance that ſhe went down the next morning, but when the family met, ſhe was comforted by finding that an early engagement engroſſed their thoughts and converſation; Mr. Aiſtrey was urging his wife to go ſomewhere with him and his daughter, to which Mrs. Aiſtrey appeared very averſe: he ſtrengthened his intreaty by ſaying,—you had better go with us, I'm ſure Miſs Fitzarthur will think herſelf obliged to you. —Before Conſtance could reflect how this was poſſible, Mrs. Aiſtrey replied,—I cannot believe Miſs Fitzarthur would be pleaſed to know I acted againſt my conſcience; beſide I have told you I have an engagement at home, and therefore cannot go.—On

this

on this the point was given up, and the carriage ordered at twelve.

Conſtance was much pleaſed with the opportunity this would afford her of ſeeing Mrs. Aiſtrey alone, and imagined ſhe choſe to ſtay at home for this purpoſe: ſtill however ſhe could not account for Mr. Aiſtrey's ſaying her going would *oblige Miſs Fitzarthur*, nor for the anſwer that it would be *againſt her conſcience*: at laſt ſhe concluded her kind friend had mentioned her wiſh for this opportunity, and that her huſband imagined it was an interview Conſtance was deſirous to avoid. Finding Mrs. Aiſtrey employed after breakfaſt ſo that ſhe could not then ſpeak to her, and truſting that ſhe ſhould have time more than ſufficient after her two impediments were gone, ſhe went up to her chamber, whither Miſs Aiſtrey followed her: ſhe would not let her reſt till ſhe had promiſed to forgive and never to mention her reading the letter, which Conſtance, whoſe temper had no gall in it, very willingly did, after having taken the occaſion to repreſent to her the evils conſequent on indulging ſuch a diſpoſition; the hearing her admonitions Miſs Aiſtrey ſeemed to conſider as the penance ſhe muſt undergo for the gratification ſhe had ſecured; and having armed herſelf with chriſtian patience, expecting probably this call for it, ſhe heard her corrector, if not with attention, yet without interruption. The arrival of the carriage put an end to

her martyrdom, and afforded her a diſpenſation from any thing farther.

CHAP. XVI.

MALICE.

IMMEDIATELY on hearing the coach drive from the door, Conſtance carried her work into Mrs. Aiſtrey's dreſſing-room, and ſhe by coming ſoon to her, preſented the deſired occaſion: there was now no fear of intruſion; but Miſs Fitzarthur needed encouragement: for though in her own mind ſhe was perſuaded it was to hear her that Mrs. Aiſtrey ſtaid at home, ſhe knew not how to begin: the ladies ſeemed equally embarraſſed; they were not ſilent, it is true, yet the little they ſaid was on topics totally foreign to this important one: the pauſes were long and frequent, and every attempt to ſpeak was the commencement of a new converſation. In this perplexing

ing ſtate Conſtance had remained near a quarter of an hour, ſtriving to get courage, and heartily angry at her own timidity, when a loud rap at the ſtreet-door announced an interruption: ſhe felt half pleaſed at a circumſtance which might free her, and yet ſhe perſuaded herſelf that ſhe could at that moment have ſpoken. Mrs. Aiſtrey ſaid not a word, and Conſtance went into the front room to ſee who was come: ſhe knew the carriage ſhe ſaw, for it was Lord Farnford's, and inſtantly flew back to Mrs. Aiſtrey, who had taken up her work as if to quit the room.—You are not going? Madam, ſaid Conſtance eagerly, pray do not leave me.—Why not? Mrs. Aiſtrey aſked. Becauſe, ſhe replied, Lord Farnford's come, and I am afraid they will ſay I am at home.—Pray do not go:—if you do, I will follow you:—I will not ſee him alone.—Indeed! returned Mrs. Aiſtrey ſmiling, are you ſerious?—Yes certainly, anſwered Conſtance; for heaven's ſake, Madam, do not *you* too doubt my ſincerity.—I will not, replied her kind friend, going back to her ſeat, I will do as you deſire me.

Lord Farnford was now announced, and as was his uſual cuſtom, immediately entered: an uncommon degree of pleaſure appeared on his countenance as he expreſſed to Miſs Fitzarthur his ſenſe of the obligation ſhe conferred on him by admitting him:—a pauſe ſucceeded to inquiries after the perſons of the family: at length his lordſhip riſing, told Conſtance he was juſt come from Mrs. Stavenell,

had a little private buſineſs from her which he wiſhed to communicate.—Whatever, ſhe replied, your lordſhip may have to ſay, I wiſh my good friend Mrs. Aiſtrey to hear.—But is Mrs Aiſtrey, ſaid he, ſufficiently acquainted with what has paſſed between us, and with the ground of our difference to make what I have to ſay intelligible? nothing upon earth is ſo tormenting as being told half a ſtory: I had rather, if you pleaſe, ſpeak to you elſewhere.—I do not chuſe anſwered Conſtance, to hear what is to be known to none except myſelf, and muſt therefore decline any private converſation.

The ſituation of Mrs. Aiſtrey was become diſtreſſing: ſhe ſaw ſhe was the obſtacle to Lord Farnford's diſcloſing the buſineſs he came on, and again offered to leave them; but Conſtance repeated her requeſt that ſhe would ſtay. Her caution nettled Lord Farnford, and he exclaimed:—You ſuſpicious creature! will you never believe you are ſafe with me; I hoped from your admitting me, your ſeverity was relaxed: ſtill you are the ſame: what can you have to fear from me; the reſpect with which you muſt confeſs I have in all circumſtances treated you intitles me to your confidence:—Do I aſk any thing unreaſonable? I am come from Mrs. Stavenell, and have private buſineſs with you which you refuſe to hear: a refuſal yet more diſreſpectful to your aunt than it is vexatious to me. Mrs. Aiſtrey now interpoſing to relieve Conſtance

ſtance, told him, with a degree of warmth, that ſhe was aſtoniſhed at his teazing Miſs Fitzarthur to do that which he muſt ſee was diſagreeable to her;—that though ſhe knew not her reaſons for refuſing to ſpeak with him in another room, ſhe was ſatisfied of her prudence, and could only infer from that and his lordſhip's behaviour that he had given her occaſion to diſtruſt him.

To this Lord Farnford replied, that ſo far was it from being the fact, that the whole of his conduct ſince ſhe had known him had been ſuch as ought to have inſpired her with confidence; but that Miſs Fitzarthur's temper was ſo variable that he never could tell in what humour he might expect to find her: If Mrs Aiſtrey was able to diſcover the motives which actuated her, he admired her ſagacity and penetration; to him they appeared inexplicable. This ill-natured intimation of coquetry in Miſs Fitzarthur, calculated to prejudice her friend, and to draw her to his ſide, miſſed its aim, but wounded Conſtance, who burſt into tears. Mrs. Aiſtrey hurt at her diſtreſs, anſwered, that if ſhe found her capricious, her opinion would be much changed; till then, and while ſhe had ground for believing her only prudently cautious, ſhe ſhould be ſure of her protection.—It is high time, returned Lord Farnford, that you, Madam, who are ſo diſpoſed to ſupport Miſs Fitzarthur, ſhould know on what foundation I thought myſelf intitled to this ſmall favour. My acquaintance with her

began laſt winter while ſhe was at Mrs. Stavenell's; there I had frequent opportunities of ſeeing her, and the regard I at firſt entertained for her, and which I for a long time ſuppreſſed that I might not tempt her to break her word to Lord Reycolm, increaſed into a moſt ardent paſſion. She knew what I felt, and her behaviour was ſometimes ſuch as to encourage my hopes, at others ſuch as to make me doubt whether I had made any progreſs in my purſuit: at length after having paid her unremittedly the adoration fit for a deity, and when ſhe ſaw my attachment attracted the notice of our friends, ſhe grew leſs variable, and from ſome favours I received and her proteſtation to thoſe whom ſhe knew to be in my intereſt, that ſhe would do nothing to make me uneaſy, I was led to imagine I had conquered her natural verſatility; but her diſtruſt returned ſuddenly, aided by her pride, which made her repent her condeſcenſion, and uſe me with aggravated cruelty and ſtudied inſult.—You cannot be ignorant, Madam, he contined of the misfortunes of her family: immediately as I was apprized of them, I wrote to her, telling her I ſtill entertained the ſame paſſion for her, and ſhould rejoice in her loſs of fortune if it prevailed on her to ſhare mine: this letter ſhe would not ſtoop to anſwer herſelf:—ſhe employed her mother to do it, and I received a poſitive refuſal, and an intimidating threat that her friends would reſent any further ſolicitation.—I leave you to judge how well my offer merited

merited such a reply, and how well it became their circumstances; yet even this could not detach me from Miss Fitzarther: I hoped she had acted under the influence of another, and still retained my love for her:—I have made use of one opportunity of seeing her since she came to town, and she then convinced me that her own sentiments were those conveyed to me. Mrs. Stavenell is my friend, and blames her extremely; but as even *she* cannot persuade her, I am firmly of opinion that I am indebted for all the ill usage I have received from Miss Fitzarthur, to pride, caprice, and a most unjustifiable regard for one, who has revenged my quarrel by slighting her.

As he spoke these last words he fixed his eyes stedfastly on Constance; she saw that Mrs. Aistrey was in suspense between her inclination still to think her right, and the necessity of admitting the force of assertions, which were yet uncontroverted; and enraged at his malicious insinuations, and disregarding all the reasons which had hitherto kept her silent, she told Lord Farnford that he well knew the motives of her conduct, and that if it was blameable he was responsible for it: this sentence unfortunately admitting of two constructions, he immediately affixed on it, that the most favourable to his purpose, and ludicrously acknowledging himself responsible for Miss Fitzarthur's errors, attempted to prevent her proceeding; but Mrs. Aistrey insisted on her being heard: she was so

agitated that she could not instantly collect herself, and at that moment a lady, whom Mrs. Aistrey had appointed to be with her, came into the room. It could not be expected that Lord Farnford would at this critical juncture offer to retire; he did not, Mrs. Aistrey took the lady into the next room, and told Constance she would go no farther.

As soon as Lord Farnford was alone with Constance, he begged her, in a low voice, to hear what he had to say with patience,: he expressed great contrition for having been betrayed into excusing his urgency by the method he had taken; he said he sincerely repented it, and would make every atonement in his power. I am rather obliged to you, she replied, for having made it so indispensibly necessary for me to do, what I have long wanted resolution to attempt. I shall now, in order to clear myself of the imputations you have been pleased to throw on me, make Mrs. Aistrey acquainted with the whole of your conduct towards me, and refer it to her to determine whether caprice, or a prudent regard for myself governs me.

I am absolutely ruined then, returned he; you will represent me in the colours most favourable to yourself, and such a woman as you appeal to will make no allowance, nor attribute what I have done to its true cause; but of this, madam, you may rest assured, that if you succeed in your endeavours to make her my enemy, I shall try the strength

ſtrength of my friends againſt yours, and in ſome way or other I do not doubt of carrying my point. I ſhould however be ſo much hurt at the idea of putting any force on you, and your voluntary conſent is ſo neceſſary to complete the felicity of calling you mine, that I ſhould forego the greater part of my wiſhes for the ſake of preſerving your favour. Here then what I propoſe, and judge which is predominant, my love for you, or my wiſh to gratify myſelf: the ſacrifice I will make coſts me dear, yet it ſhall be made: from this moment I renounce all hope of prevailing with you; and though my buſineſs this morning was again to urge you, as I ſee you would not be happy with me, I relinquiſh the intention. When I have given this proof of regard for you, in preference to myſelf, I truſt you will not refuſe me the recompenſe I aſk for ſo great, ſo valuable, ſo painful a renunciation: if you believe my love for you, and know how ardent it is, you may form a faint conception of what I ſuffer in thus giving you up, and you will not refuſe the only thing that can ſupport me under it: all I aſk is your friendſhip, and to be allowed to ſee you; and, if you will grant this, I promiſe, on my word and honor, never again to importune you. I will never, from this moment, open my lips on the ſubject of my paſſion; if I ſuffer, it ſhall be in ſecret; it will be leſs painful than the conſciouſneſs of having made you wretched: I own my errors;

attribute them to their proper cauſe, and blame your own beauty and attraction for what I have done.

Conſtance, ever ready to diſcover, to acknowledge, and to applaud merit of any kind, and whoſe anger ſeldom outlaſted its cauſe, now wiſhed ſhe could prevail on herſelf to think leſs unfavourably of one who ſeemed diſpoſed to ſacrifice his peace to her's; it was forbearance, it was generoſity, it was virtue, and ſhe felt hurt at the pain ſhe occaſioned him; yet her averſion to him did not decreaſe; he was Lord Farnford—he was odious to her. She however flattered herſelf with the hope of being freed from any farther alarms, but fearful leſt her diſpoſition to believe what it was ſo much her intereſt ſhould be true, might make her leſs cautious than ſhe ought to be, ſhe anſwered him by ſaying that if he really found any difficulty in renouncing her, the ſeeing her would only increaſe it, and that ſhe thought, for their mutual eaſe, it was better they ſhould avoid meeting.—And can you, he interrupted, cruelly inſiſt on completing a puniſhment, which in its moſt mitigated ſtate I can hardly bear, by this aggravation? I cannot agree to ſuch hard terms: to forſake my hopes, and to be baniſhed from you is intolerable.—Well then, ſaid Conſtance, who dreaded driving him to extremities, how am I to be aſſured that you will perform this promiſe? what reliance do you think I can have on your proteſtations?—Remember

member, he replied, how I behaved to you when I had you in my power.—That remembrance, ſaid ſhe, would act againſt you.—No ſurely, anſwered his lordſhip, if you recollect the offer I made you, and which Metward oppoſed—you may ſay I was raſh, and that is the worſt: think of what I did; compare it with what I could have done; and then you muſt be convinced that as I then would have given up to relieve you, I ſhall not defeat my endeavours by a breach of my word.

Judging it ſafeſt to yield, ſhe agreed to what he propoſed, and a treaty of peace was concluded, which he made her ratify by hands-ſhaking: he aſked a ſtill farther taken of reconciliation, but this ſhe poſitively refuſed: it was a favour, even Lord Calorne, well as he ſtood with her, and intimate as their connection was, had never preſumed to ſolicit, and ſhe had no inclination to make an exception for the ſake of Lord Farnford: he encouraged her hope that his intentions were what ſhe wiſhed them, by declining to urge it, and in lieu of it, obtained from her a promiſe not to let Mrs. Aiſtrey know the cauſe of their difference, nor to ſay any thing that might prejudice her againſt him: to this ſhe at firſt warmly objected, as it was excluding her from the means of juſtifying herſelf, and of clearing her conduct from ſuſpicion which he had excited: ſhe offered to inſure him from Mrs. Aiſtrey's reſentment, but this would not ſatisfy him; he had a large ſhare of foreſight, and knew how little

chance there was for his ever re-entering the houſe, if Mrs. Aiſtrey was ſo alarmed: he therefore ſtrenuouſly inſiſted on this point; he ſaid what had paſſed would be conſtrued into unguarded warmth, and a trifling quarrel between them; and without ſhe conſented he not only threatened to retract his conceſſions, but ſolemnly ſwore that he would never leave perſecuting her till he had married her: theſe being terrific evils, ſhe was forced to buy peace and ſecurity at the price he ſet on them, and thus ſaw herſelf free, unleſs Lord Farnford was more completely wicked than even *ſhe* had ever thought him, from his importunate ſolicitations.

Mrs. Aiſtrey returned before he went away; ſhe ſeemed not a little ſurprized at the change of temper ſhe obſerved, and in raillery remarked on it: Lord Farnford prevented all farther inquiry by intimating that the quarrels between him and Miſs Fitzarthur were ſuch as were eaſily adjuſted; and ſaid that as they had reciprocally offended, they had reciprocally forgiven. Mrs. Aiſtrey replied, as if not perfectly ſatisfied, that ſhe was glad their charity was of ſuch extent, and his lordſhip, to whom the ſubject was not very agreeable, almoſt immediately called for his carriage.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

ZEAL.

IN a few minutes after he was gone, Mr. Aiſtrey and his daughter returned home, and relieved Conſtance from her dread of thoſe inquiries which a ſhort time before ſhe had ſo much wiſhed would have ſpared her the taſk of introducing the ſubject ſhe thought herſelf bound to explain: her fears however were groundleſs, for Mrs. Aiſtrey did not ſeem inclined to aſk any queſtions, and ſcarcely to ſpeak——Well, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, to his wife as he came in, What ſport have you had?—Was Miſs in the dumps? or did ſhe behave prettily?—How has Lord Farnford come off? with a ſcratched face, ha?—He received no anſwer, and Conſtance aſked how he knew of Lord Farnford's having been there.—Aye, he replied, that's the wonder: you muſt know I'm a conjurer, and deal a little in the black art.—I'll tell you; poor thing! it wants to hear all about it; but 'twas your own fault miſſy, that you wasn't as wiſe as me: if you hadn't been as high as St. Paul's you might have been as cunning too.——This was wholly unintelligible

to

to Conſtance; but, aware of the conſtruction that would be put on her curioſity, ſhe forbore any other queſtion. Finding ſhe would not aſk again, and unable to deny himſelf the pleaſure of divulging this grand myſtery, Mr. Aiſtrey, after having tried to torment her ſufficiently long, told her that the letter which ſhe had burnt and his daughter had ſnatched from the fire, informed her of Lord Farnford's intention to be with her that morning; and ſo, continued he, that was the reaſon Mary and I got ourſelves out of the way, that we might not ſpoil good company, and you know I tried to perſuade my wife to come along, and ſhe wou'dn't, I hope ſhe wasn't in the way, there was no perſuading her, though I told her how ſhy you'd be, and that you woudn't ſpeak out if ſhe was by.

Mrs. Aiſtrey's reaſon for ſtaying at home was developed, and Conſtance expreſſed her gratitude for this truly generous care of her. I am very happy, ſhe anſwered, in having opportunities of obliging you, though in this inſtance I muſt own I almoſt repent what I have done.—Her diſpleaſure was viſible while ſhe ſpoke, and the declaration alarmed Miſs Fitzarthur: the curioſity of the huſband and daughter was awakened, and they were loud in deſiring to know what it meant, while Conſtance, who feared having offended Mrs. Aiſtrey, waited with ſilent anxiety to learn why ſhe repented her kindneſs: neither clamor nor ſilence prevailed on her to ſay any more, and thoſe of her own family

mily, deſpairing of being gratified, began gueſſing at her meaning.—I know, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, what my wife means: Miſs wou'dn't ſpeak, and I ſuppoſe my lord told her ſhe only behaved herſelf ſo afore company. No, no, interrupted his Polly, I dare ſay Lord Farnford had found out that mamma ſtaid at home, and ſo wou'dn't come: you know he ſaid he ſhould expect to ſee her alone.

To put an end to conjecture, Conſtance now entreated Mrs. Aiſtrey to give a reaſon for what ſhe had ſaid. Can *you* need to be informed? ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, looking intently at her. Indeed, replied Conſtance, I ſtand as much in need of information, and am as much at a loſs as any one here. Why then, returned ſhe, I will tell you. I was extremely ſorry to find myſelf ſuch a reſtraint on your converſation with Lord Farnford: were you afraid I ſhould be offended at your ſuffering me to go away? or what was it that made you deſire me to ſtay when I evidently obliged you to aſſume a behaviour not natural to you?—This, anſwered Conſtance, I can eaſily reconcile: it was my ſincere wiſh to avoid ſeeing Lord Farnford alone: it was prudent, nay it was my duty to do ſo; but when you were called away, I was forced to it: he, you ſaw, had irritated me: when you were gone he made conceſſions, and gave me every poſſible aſſurance that I ſhould have no future cauſe of complaint, and, how wiſely I will not pretend to determine, I promiſed to ſhew no farther reſentment.

ſentment. Very well, my dear, interrupted Mrs. Aiſtrey, if you are ſatisfied I ought to be ſo; you will, notwithſtanding allow me to be a little ſurprized when I had lately left you highly diſpleaſed with each other, to find you on my return very good friends.

That ſhe herſelf was neither ſatisfied nor pleaſed, Mrs. Aiſtrey's countenance ſhewed; but as it was impoſſible for Miſs Fitzarthur to explain this awkward buſineſs any farther then, ſhe was going out of the room, when Mr. Aiſtrey calling her back, and ſhaking her hand violently, wiſhed her joy of having come to her ſenſes—to my ſenſes? ſhe repeated: I am ſorry I have ever done any thing to make you ſuſpect I had loſt them. Well now, continued he, I hope we ſhall have no more ſquabbles: I knew if you once met alone all would be ſettled. I dare ſay my lord will make a very good huſband; don't you think ſo, ſlyboots, ha? God forbid, returned Conſtance, I ſhould ever put it to the trial. What now, you're going back to your old ſhy tricks again, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey: I think when you're in one of theſe here humours we muſt ſend for Lord Farnford.

Indeed ſir, replied Conſtance, whom this impertinent raillery fretted, you totally miſunderſtand both Lord Farnford and me, I aſſure you. Aye, interrupted he, aſſure me of what you pleaſe, but that you don't like my lord, for I'm ſure that is impoſſible. Indeed I think ſo too, ſaid miſs, and

I think

I think he was amazing good natured to come, after ſome folks had been ſo huffiſh. Pooh, pooh, her father anſwered, he knows ſhe likes him; aye, lovers muſt bear a great deal: I dare ſay my lord has ſeen enough of the world to know how to manage twenty ſuch: his time will come, and if I was as Miſs Fitzarthur I ſhould be afraid of uſing him ſo ill, for fear he ſhould return it in kind when I was his wife. To this Conſtance replied, that ſhe had no ſuch fear, for that ſhe muſt have loſt her ſenſes irrecoverably ever to give him that advantage over her; and Miſs Aiſtrey, whom nothing would have undeceived, exclaimed, O Lord! Lord! how can you talk ſo? will any body make me believe that you would refuſe ſuch a huſband if you was left to yourſelf? And ſo handſome too, obſerved miſs, I'm ſure, if it was to ſave my life, I cou'dn't do it. Aye, and ſo handſome, as Polly ſays, continued her father, and with a matter of I don't how many thouſand a year, and a title and all—O no, miſſy madam, you will never make me believe that: I cannot think you ſo ſilly. Indeed then, ſaid Conſtance, your opinion of me was much too favourable; for I ſolemnly proteſt, were all theſe advantages and honours ten times what they are, I would on no conſideration have Lord Farnford: this he knows and believes. At theſe words Mrs. Aiſtrey ſtarted, and looked at Miſs Fitzarthur, as if ſhe doubted if it was ſhe who uttered them: Mr.

Aiſtrey,

Aiſtrey fell into a violent fit of laughter; and Conſtance went to dreſs.

Miſs Aiſtrey ſoon followed her: ſhe wanted to know whether Conſtance was really ſincere: but ſhe was not formed for a confidante, even if Miſs Fitzarthur had been inclined to indulge her; ſhe tried by every artifice her ſmall talents were capable of, till failing to obtain the diſcovery ſhe expected, and finding nothing was to be learnt that ſhe would credit, ſhe went away in ſearch of ſome new trifle.

A meſſage came from Mrs. Stavenell, juſt before dinner, deſiring Miſs Fitzarthur would drink tea with her: as ſhe was not otherwiſe engaged ſhe could not decline the invitation, and her aunt's coach was to call her early. All dinner time Mr. Aiſtrey's wit was on the ſtretch to teaze Conſtance: he inſiſted on it that ſhe was to meet Lord Farnford, and not even her ſaying, that could ſhe think ſo, ſhe would not go, could convince him: but that which gave her the moſt ſerious concern was the obſervation that Mrs. Aiſtrey's behaviour to her was cold and reſerved: ſhe was evidently diſpleaſed, and it was much eaſier for Conſtance to gueſs at the cauſe than to remove it at that time. As her agreement with Lord Farnford was that ſhe ſhould not reveal the cauſe of their difference, nor prejudice Mrs. Aiſtrey againſt him, ſhe ſtill could, in a great meaſure, clear herſelf: much remained for her to ſay without infringing on her promiſe, and the peculiar

peculiar predicament in which ſhe ſtood, obliged her to exert this power to its utmoſt limits for the vindication of her character. It was therefore her deſign, at the firſt opportunity, to tell her whatever ſhe might of the affair; but this ſhe could not do before ſhe went to Mrs. Stavenell's, whoſe coach called for her ſoon after ſix, and it was very unwillingly that Conſtance quitted Mrs. Aiſtrey, under the idea of having loſt her favor.

Mrs. Stavenell received her with a forced ſmile, and as ſoon as ſhe was ſeated, told her ſhe was ſurprized at hearing how ſhe behaved to Lord Farnford that morning; that ſhe had ſent for her to know what ſhe had to ſay for herſelf, and to adviſe her to be a little leſs inſolent to her betters. All the pleaſure which this viſit was to be productive of was now laid open to Conſtance's view, and ſhe endeavoured to arm herſelf with patience to hear whatever her aunt's indignation might dictate, only interrupting her by deſiring to know that ſhe was ſecure againſt Lord Farnford's ſudden entrance; for ſhe began to think he and his kind protectreſs might have determined to try what their united efforts could do. Indeed, Mrs. Stavenell replied, you needn't be afraid: I own I wanted him to be here, and I told him you was coming, and wanted him to hear what you would ſay; but he ſaid he ſhould make you uneaſy, and wou'dn't come. I ſhould have wondered if he had, for you have uſed him too ill to expect he'll take any more pains about you. I believe

lieve you may be pretty ſafe: you've miſſed a fine opportunity, and you deſerve to be ſlighted: Mrs. Stavenell's anger gave her niece much moreconcern than her intelligence; ſhe endeavoured coolly and forcibly to repreſent to her the immorality of marrying a man for whom, to ſay the leaſt, ſhe could entertain no reſpect: this, as might be expected, was laughed at: ſhe then objected the ſmall chance ſhe ſtood for any tolerable degree of happineſs with one of ſuch libertine principles: this was denied: ſhe was told Lord Farnford would be quite another man when he was married, and that if all the world were as nice as ſhe was, there would be no living in it; that he was not worſe than other young men, and that more people would diſlike him for not having thoſe faults that ſhe thought ſo much of, than would like him if he were what would pleaſe her.

All Mrs. Stavenell's eloquence was exerted on this favourite ſubject, which was not dropped and ſcarcely interrupted during Conſtance's ſtay: all that conſideration of intereſt, all that perſuaſion, never more improperly applied than in a caſe where acquieſcence ought to be perfectly voluntary, could do, ſhe tried, and tried ineffectually: and her ill ſucceſs ſo irritated her that ſhe told her niece, ſince her obſtinacy was ſuch, ſhe ſhould ſmart for it: that, as ſhe was well aware, a large part of her fortune was at her own diſpoſal, and that, upon her life, if ſhe wou'dn't have Lord Farnford

Farnford ſhe ſhould never ſee a ſhilling of it; that it ſhould not be ſaid hopes from her kept up her pride, but that, if ſhe would do as ſhe would have her, five thouſand pounds ſhould immediately be her own.

Where reaſon was ſo deficient it was only Mrs Stavenell that would hope to prevail on a mind like Conſtance's by a bribe, and when ſhe had ſo firmly refuſed 25,000l. a year, the chances for her accepting a gift of five thouſand, or fifty thouſand pounds were few: ſhe however made the experiment, and learnt by it that her niece's reſolution was not to be ſhaken.

At nine her coach came to take Miſs Fitzarthur home, and at parting, when Conſtance ſaid that whatever advantages ſhe might think it right to withhold, ſhe truſted ſhe would not deprive her of the whole of her regard, ſhe anſwered—that ſhe was no hypocrite; ſhe could not but be angry at ſuch folly, and that ſhe ſhould expect when ſhe next ſaw her there, to hear that ſhe had changed her mind. This, ſaid Conſtance, is in effect forbidding me your houſe. She replied that it reſted with her to make it ſo or not, and that ſhe could have no pleaſure in her company while ſhe was ſo perverſe. To ſee a girl, ſaid ſhe, who has almoſt nothing to depend upon, ſo ſelf-willed as to refuſe an offer that the daughter of a duke might be glad on, is too provoking to be born: you have been finely brought up! now ſee what all your high notions

will do for you; now try what all your reading and ſtudying will come to:—your father and mother had better brought you up like other girls; but no, truly, miſs was to be ſomething as no body ever ſee,—and a fine hand ſhe has made on it!—refuſed an earl with five and twenty thouſand a year, and a man who adored her, becauſe he wasn't as grave as a parſon, or rather I believe becauſe ſhe liked ſomebody elſe better; for to tell you the truth, madam, you have not deceived me: it isn't any thing in Lord Farnford's character as you don't like; you woudn't refuſe him if another didn't ſtand in the way. Indeed, replied Conſtance, I am ſincere in ſaying that the immorality of Lord Farnford's character is my objection to him, and it would be an objection I could not get over, even if—if—

Here ſhe heſitated, and Mrs. Stavenell anſwered: You are waſting your breath to no purpoſe: do not pretend to tell me what I know cannot be true: you are in love with Lord Calorne, that's the reaſon. I found it out, though you carried matters on ſo underhand: you don't care whether he's more righteous than Lord Farnford, or no: you could live very happy with him, if he'd humour you and give up Miſs Ecklow for your ſake.—Whatever may have been my opinion of him, ſaid Conſtance, not daring to truſt her tongue to utter his name, it does not biaſs me with reſpect to Lord Farnford; his generoſity has, however, made me

eaſy, he has promiſed to ceaſe teazing me: and you may be aſhamed, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, of having made him make ſuch a promiſe; but I repeat what I ſaid; the next time as I ſee you here, you muſt tell me, if it isn't too late, you've changed your mind. I cannot change it, anſwered Conſtance, while the tears guſhed from her eyes: do not ſend me away in anger: do not let me think that when I go out of this houſe that I am never to enter it again. I ſee no reaſon ſaid her aunt, why I'm to give up to you, I'd adviſe you to think on't. She then rang the bell and diſmiſſed her niece, without the leaſt feeling for her diſtreſs.

CHAP. XVIII.

SUSPENCE.

WHEN ſhe got home, Mr. Aiſtrey and his daughter were out, and Mrs. Aiſtrey was gone to bed, indiſpoſed: ſhe found on the parlour table a letter for her from Lord Reycolm, and here was a new ſource of uneaſineſs. He now opened his heart to her, and told her he was made wretch-

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ed by a cauſe ſhe could not have ſuſpected: Lady Reycolm's behaviour had been at firſt unkind and capricious to him: her relations received her with joy, him with coolneſs, and had encouraged her in a life of ſuch diſſipation and folly as no ſerious man could ſubmit to: he had tried lenient meaſures without ſucceſs, and once having uſed ſharper reproof, to awaken her from a ſituation injurious to her health and morals, ſhe had, moſt unadviſedly in the heat of anger, replied, that Mr. Stavenell would not have treated her ſo cruelly. This had diſcovered to her huſband what he ought never to have known, and he now wrote to his couſin to beg her advice on the meaſures to be purſued for reclaiming Lady Reycolm, whoſe good qualities he acknowledged, and whom he ſeemed to love as tenderly as ever.

She roſe early in the morning to anſwer this unpleaſing letter: ſhe was ſhocked at its intelligence, ſhe ſincerely pitied Lord Reycolm, and ſhe feared his caſe deſperate. On one head, indeed, ſhe hoped ſhe could afford him comfort; it was in her power to make him perfectly eaſy with regard to Mr. Stavenell; but ſhe diſſuaded him from bringing her to England, on which point he had conſulted her. She ſtrongly urged his taking her to her relation at Bourdeaux, againſt whom all her family ſeemed moſt unreaſonably united, though he was a man eſteemed by the world: the intereſt he had expreſſed for Lady Reycolm when in her diſtreſs,

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proved his regard for her; and this ſhe propoſed as the only means of reforming her. To a query whether he ſhould thwart or indulge her ſhe anſwered that he muſt on no account relax his authority, as without it nothing done could be effectual.

When ſhe had cloſed this conſolatory epiſtle, ſhe went down to breakfaſt; and perceived that the coldneſs with which, Mrs. Aiſtrey had the day before treated her, was increaſed. Not doubting that ſhe could, at the firſt opportunity ſhe had of explaining her conduct, remove it, ſhe waited impatiently for their ſeparating that ſhe might beg to ſpeak with her. Mr. Aiſtrey ſeemed unfortunately to take ſo much more than uſual pleaſure in hearing himſelf talk, and Miſs Fitzarthur's viſit the preceding evening to Mrs. Stavenell afforded ſuch a field for his wit to diſplay itſelf in, that it was a long time before they quitted the table. Mrs Aiſtrey was not, as ſhe had always been, the firſt to move, and Conſtance's patience began to fail, at laſt, finding there was no other way of getting the audience ſhe wiſhed for, ſhe told her in a whiſper that ſhe had ſomething to ſay to her, and ſhould be glad if ſhe would call her when ſhe came into her dreſſing-room.—I am ſorry, my dear, returned ſhe, that I have not a minute to ſpare you; I have an early engagement out. and many things to do before I go.

The cold civility with which this, in effect a refuſal to hear her, was delivered, ſtruck Conſtance

to the heart; and ſhe could ſcarcely conceal her emotion till ſhe got up ſtairs: her diſtreſs now, at the time when ſhe hoped for its abatement, was increaſing: deſerted by Mrs. Stavenell, and driven from her houſe; diſtruſted by Mrs. Aiſtrey, and yet her gueſt, ſhe neither knew how to bear, or to extricate herſelf from the load that cruſhed her. At length ſhe determined, whatever followed, ſhe would not ſtay at Mrs. Aiſtrey's, where ſhe knew ſhe could not be welcome to the only perſon whoſe good opinion ſhe was anxious for, and that ſhe would, as ſoon as poſſible, acquaint her with her reſolution of returning to her mother. This deſign was juſt formed when Miſs Aiſtrey came up, and begging earneſtly to be admitted, gave her a packet, ſhe knew the hand in which it was directed was Lord Farnford's, and was going to return it unopened, till recollecting that if he kept his promiſe he was intitled to reſpect, and that any failure in that particular might irritate him, ſhe broke the ſeal, and found incloſed a ticket for a concert, with a card deſiring her acceptance of it to accompany Mr. Aiſtrey's family; and the invitation concluded with intimating that he was prevented from meeting them; a hint apparently intended to remove any ſcruples. She was, however, in no diſpoſition to partake of ſuch amuſements, and therefore declined the offer, with an apology and thanks for the intended favour.

Preſently Miſs Aiſtrey returned with a meſſage from

from her mother, to tell Conſtance that they were going into the city, and deſired to know if ſhe had any buſineſs that way which would make her wiſh to be with them; but ſhe preferred ſtaying at home, and the family ſoon after ſet out and returned no more till dinner time. In this interval Mr. Stavenell called, and adminiſtered the only comfort ſhe could receive by approving her conduct and encouraging her to perſevere in it: he was informed of Lord Farnford's new made reſolution, and confirm the opinion of his ſincerity by ſaying that he had really declined ſeeing her at Mrs. Stavenell's leſt he ſhould diſtreſs her: he nevertheleſs, adviſed her being on her guard, though he thought ſhe might ſafely behave with leſs reſerve. The load on Miſs Fitzarthur's mind was much lightened by a promiſe from her couſin that if Mrs. Aiſtrey again declined hearing her, he would himſelf ſatisfy her: he ſtaid with her long enough to perceive ſhe was leſs unhappy than when he came, and then ended his viſit, in which ſhe had for obvious reaſons forborne mentioning the letter ſhe had received from Lord Reycolm.

When ſhe heard Mr. and Mrs. Aiſtrey come bome ſhe went down ſtairs, and in her way met Mrs. Aiſtrey coming up with a letter in her hand, which ſhe was very attentively reading. As ſoon as they met Mrs. Aiſtrey put the letter in her pocket, and Conſtance aſked her if ſhe was then at leiſure to ſpare her a few minutes; a queſtionwhich ſeemed to em-

barraſs her; after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe anſwered:—If you have any thing to ſay, Miſs Fitzarthur, come into the dreſſing-room: Conſtance immediately followed her, and ſhutting the door, ſaid;—I have wiſhed much, Madam, for an opportunity of ſatisfying the doubts I am ſure you entertain of me: I cannot live in your houſe under the idea of having diſpleaſed you.—I have no right, replied Mrs. Aiſtrey to be diſpleaſed with you: I do not pretend to it.—You have a right, interrupted Conſtance: the friendſhip you have ſhewn me entitles you to know whether or not I am deſerving of its continuance: you ſuſpect, Madam, that I am not ſincere in what I have ſaid of Lord Farnford:—I aſſure you, on my honour, I am; and will account to you for the ſudden, and I own wonderful change of my conduct. I will tell you every thing that I am at liberty to reveal, and, if that does not remove your ſuſpicions, I will endeavour to prevail with him to releaſe me from a promiſe of ſecrecy which he forced me to make.—Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, I will ſpare you the trouble of convincing me, by telling you ingenuouſly that I know the motives of your conduct, and will you bear me to add, that I think you rather wrong in what you have done?—Where?—tell me, dear Madam, where have I erred, that I may if poſſible correct myſelf, replied Conſtance.—I own, reſumed Mrs. Aiſtrey, part of what has paſſed between you and Lord Farnford is ſtill myſterious; ye

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from what I have learnt, I am ſorry to conclude that you either brave or are blind to the inconveniencies of your preſent ſituation:—you do not know enough of the world to be aware of the dangers that await you. I am ſincerely ſorry for the paſt, and wiſh I could perſuade you ſo to turn the future to your advantage as to cover it:—if you perſiſt you may have cauſe to repent it.—Pray Madam, ſaid Conſtance, let me underſtand you: what you ſay is unintelligible to me, ſurely you have been miſinformed.—No, ſhe replied, my information is better than I wiſh it. I ſhould be very happy to find myſelf deceived.—Then I beg, ſaid Miſs Fitzarthur, that you will tell me what you have heard.—I cannot now, ſhe anſwered, perhaps you can gueſs when I tell you, I adviſe your availing yourſelf of Lord Farnford's preſent diſpoſition towards you, and ſheltering yourſelf under his rank from the cenſure of the world: though we retain our memory, we may be awed into ſilence.

Theſe words were ſo pronounced as to convince Conſtance that her hitherto kind friend was, by ſome means or other, ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed againſt her: ſhe could ſcarcely get breath enough to beg a further explanation, but this Mrs. Aiſtrey declined, ſaying ſhe had not time, for dinner was juſt ready, and ſhe muſt go.—Well then, ſaid her ſuppliant, let me ſee you after dinner.—She replied, that this was impoſſible as ſhe muſt dreſs for her engagement i the evening.—Indeed, cried Conſtance, you muſt

not go till you have at leaſt told me when you will explain what you have ſaid: I am ſure you think very ill of me, tell me when I ſhall ſee you.—A few hours, anſwered Mrs. Aiſtrey, will determine what I am to think; I will let you know the firſt leiſure I have tomorrow morning, till then, I beg you will not importune me. With this Conſtance was obliged to reſt ſatisfied. Mrs. Aiſtrey obviouſly diſturbed, quitted her, and ſhe remained alone diſtreſt beyond conception. A ſervant ſoon came to call her to dinner; ſhe ſent down an excuſe, and then came Miſs herſelf with a thouſand exclamations and inquiries; but Conſtance was too much agitated either to gratify her curioſity or obey the ſummons: ſhe aſſured Miſs Aiſtrey that, were ſhe to go down ſhe could not ſit at table, and after much entreaty and banter ſhe was ſuffered to ſtay where ſhe was for two hours, when Mrs. Aiſtrey ſent to tell her they would drink tea before they went to the concert, and therefore deſired ſhe would come to the parlour.

Though Mrs Aiſtrey's countenance wore ſtill an unuſual air of auſterity, it was mixed with benevolence, and it was eaſy to perceive ſhe pitied the diſtreſs under which Conſtance laboured; yet, as if conſcious that ſhe acted rightly in her ſeverity, though againſt her inclination, ſhe did not offer to relieve her, as ſhe might have done by a brief explanation. From ſuch diſpleaſure as her's Miſs Fitzarthur ſuffered infinitely more than from that which is violently

lently expreſſed: a torrent of rage ſhe might have trembled at; bitter and undeſerved reproaches might for a moment have irritated her: theſe ſhe could have borne with much more fortitude than ſuch ſettled anger, which ſeemed as if forced to riſe, notwithſtanding the oppoſition it met from affection. Her eyes overflowed every minute with tears, and it was with no ſmall difficulty ſhe could bear to be in the ſame place with one whom ſhe feared having juſtly, though unconſciouſly offended.

When ſhe was left again alone ſhe tormented herſelf with endeavouring to conſtrue what Mrs. Aiſtrey had ſaid, and found it impoſſible to do it in any way that afforded her ſatisfaction: ſhe longed ardently for the morrow, which was at leaſt to relieve her from ſuſpence, yet when ſhe conſidered how much depended on her being able to exculpate herſelf from charges whoſe purport ſhe could not gueſs at, and that a few hours would determine whether ſhe might ſtill hope for a continuance of Mrs. Aiſtrey's friendſhip, or muſt relinquiſh it for ever, ſhe was terrified.

A rap at the door awaked her from her reverie, and a meſſage from Lord Farnford obliged her to recollect herſelf; he deſired to ſee her; he had been told ſhe was at home and alone, ſhe could not deny herſelf, nor could ſhe, conſiſtently with her promiſe, refuſe to ſee him; ſhe therefore, though little diſpoſed for any company, and leaſt of all for his, admitted him. He ſeemed highly ſenſible of the

favour, and gave her time to rally her diſperſed intellects by acknowledging it. Her ſituation was not very enviable: obliged to converſe with a perſon of whom ſhe was afraid, and yet deſirous to behave as if he was a new acquaintance. He perceived ſome thing had diſturbed her, and ſagaciouſly imagining ſhe did not feel quite at eaſe, he told her, with an air of frankneſs, that he believed he diſtreſſed her, and that if ſhe could not ſufficiently rely on his honour to think herſelf ſafe, he would give her an additional proof of his ſincerity by leaving her:—I was ſaid he, engaged for the evening, but was told a few hours ago that the meeting I was to have been preſent at was poſtponed: I had then parted with my concert tickets, and preferring an hour's converſation with you to the opera, as I imagined by the note you honored me with this morning you was to be found at home, I followed the impulſe of my inclination, and came to make you my firſt viſit in the character of your *friend:* if you feel the leaſt uneaſineſs at my being here, my carriage is ſtill at the door; and as I will never purchaſe the greateſt gratification at the price of a moment's pain to you, I will forego the pleaſure I promiſed myſelf.

Thoſe words re-aſſured Conſtance; ſhe condemned her fears as weakneſs, and told him that a great part of the uneaſineſs ſhe diſcovered aroſe from ſomething which had happened before he came: he very politely expreſt his concern that any thing

thing had occaſioned it, and his wiſhes that he could remove it. A part of it, ſaid ſhe, your lordſhip might remove, and you would render me a very eſſential ſervice by doing ſo. She then told him what had paſſed in her viſit, at Mrs. Stavenell's the day before, and how much he would oblige her if he could prevail on her aunt to be ſatisfied with their mutual reſolution. This, replied Lord Farnford, is a ſubject on which I ought to have ſpoken to you, for I imagined you would conclude it entirely in my power to perſuade her, and would think me very deficient in neglecting it; but I really believe it is a thing not to be done at preſent; ſhe is almoſt as angry with me as with you: ſhe ſays my behaviour was cowardly, and that if I could ſo eaſily give up, I did not deſerve to ſucceed, and ſhe tried to divert me from maintaining my reſolution, which neither ſhe nor any one elſe ſhall do, while I am ſatisfied that my adhering to it makes you happier.

So little of the terror which Lord Farnford uſually exited in Conſtance now remained, that, as far as the late agitation of her ſpirits would permit, ſhe was chearful: his talents for converſation were ſuch as rendered him agreeable, and ſhe was not diſpleaſed thus to forget ſome part of the time ſhe was to be in ſuſpenſe. He appeared gratified by the confidence he had inſpired her with, the evening paſſed pleaſantly to one, tolerably to the other, and when he took his leave he repeated his

promiſes; and added his wiſhes that, on the ſame terms, ſhe would often indulge him with her company.

CHAP. XIX.

CATECHISING.

WHEN Lord Farnford was gone, as ſhe rather deſired to avoid Mrs. Aiſtrey, ſhe went to her room, and all the doubts and fears which for two hours ſhe had forgotten, returned on her mind. She went to bed, where ſhe found little reſt, and ſhe roſe fatigued in the morning: the time when her ſuſpenſe was to ceaſe drew near, and every noiſe ſhe heard in the houſe ſhe hoped was a ſummons for her to hear an explanation of what had ſo diſtreſſed her. Before nine o'clock, Mrs. Aiſtrey's maid brought her a letter, the contents of which were theſe:

'My Dear Miſs Fitzarthur.

'I ſtand engaged by my promiſe to give you the ſatisfaction you requeſted, this morning; but I find myſelf very unequal to the performance of that promiſe. A night paſſed in the moſt unremitted anxiety has almoſt incapacitated me from converſing on *indifferent* ſubjects; on that which ſo intereſts my ſincereſt affections I am ſure I could verbally ſay nothing, That my weakneſs may not injure

injure you, I will by this means explain what I hinted at yeſterday, and will ingenuouſly tell you all my ſuſpicions and my fears.

'The dejection of ſpirits under which you have laboured while you have been with me, though I thought it in a great meaſure unaccountable, was not, in my opinion, a ſubject for ſcrutiniſing inquiry: I have been diſappointed in my expectation that it would wear off, and it is that which particularly intereſts me for you: perhaps ſome one of the ſubjects on which I am about to adviſe you, occaſions it; at leaſt it argues a heart not quite inflexible.

'I was firſt made uneaſy by your reluctance to viſit Mrs. Stavenell when I told you I had engaged you to go there: that you ſhould be as you obviouſly were, unwilling to ſee a relation in whoſe power ſo much lay, and who, in the ſhort time ſhe ſtaid with me, ſeemed much attached to you, indicated ſomething productive of no good, and, as you did not communicate to me any reaſon for this reluctance, I was unable to trace it to any ſatisfactory ſource.

'Your behaviour to Lord Farnford is that which has excited in me the greateſt apprehenſion for your welfare; though I fear all advice in this inſtance comes too late, the duty incumbent on me, while you are under my care, forbids me to remain ſilent when I believe your ſituation dangerous. You remember the inquiries I made after I had ſeen your diſtreſs at hearing his name; an interruption pre-

vented, or ſeemed to prevent your accounting for it, and I cannot ſuppoſe you wiſhed to account for it, as you never after attempted it. I knew not what to think; you declared to me a very ſtrong diſlike of Lord Farnford, the ſincerity of which, other circumſtances made me ſuſpect, and I withheld my judgment, hoping every day would confirm my good opinion of you: for this I have waited in vain, and am now ſorry to ſay I can no longer doubt that your behaviour, when you are not alone with him, is aſſumed: but for what purpoſe? If he is your lover, why is it to be a ſecret? Surely your aunt would not be the friend of any one who was not, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the term *your* friend: I will therefore ſuppoſe that Lord Farnford entertains a proper regard for you: what reaſon can there be for diſowning it? and if you have any for rejecting him, why do you receive his viſits? certainly, Miſs Fitzarthur, this is ſtrangely inconſiſtent conduct: if you really diſlike him, you might get rid of his importunity; if you do not, what is the impediment to your confeſſing it?

'The difficulty I find in imagining that one ſo amply endowed with reaſon would act irrationally, drives me to the purſuit of ſome other cauſe. I remember you told me you were *in fear* of Lord Farnford; if ſo, why do you ſee him alone? and how do you account for what I was a witneſs to the day before yeſterday? I would not ſuppoſe you either perverſely obſtinate, or weakly complying; and

and yet one of the two parts of your behaviour, at the time I allude to, appears to deſerve either the firſt or laſt of theſe harſh epithets. If what he urged as a reaſon for aſking to ſpeak with you in private is true, and if your deportment has been, as he aſſerted, capricious, he has much to complain of; and his diſpoſition to bear with it is as ſtrong a proof of his affection, as his ſtill continuing his addreſſes is, in your preſent ſituation, of his diſintereſtedneſs.

'In order to make any part of your conduct agree with your profeſſions, I muſt believe, notwithſtanding all that poſitively contradicts ſuch credulity, that you diſlike Lord Farnford: conſider then, my dear, what is the foundation of your averſion, and whether the propriety and advantage of accepting ſuch a match may not be ſufficiently forcible to overcome prejudices. It, is far from my intention to attempt perſuading you to act againſt your inclination, but you muſt take care that inclination is fitly governed, and that it does not miſlead you.

'What I have ſuggeſted is founded on the ſuppoſition either that you are mutually attached to each other, or that you do not like Lord Farnford; it is not impoſſible that the firſt may be true, notwithſtanding appearances: perhaps ſome of his or your relations have objections to your having him, while others wiſh to promote it: if it is ſo, if you are obeying what you think your duty, and counteracting your inclination, how greatly are you to be admired

admired and pitied! but then, for your own ſake, avoid ſeeing him, a conflict of this kind is made ſtill more terrible by meeting.

'Yet this idea which, though it leaves you unhappy, I would cheriſh, as it entitles you to regard, to pity, to reſpect, I know not how to admit: I ſhould be ſorry to judge for a moment to hardly, but were this the caſe, I think I am well enough acquainted with you to believe you do not ſo want fortitude and prudence. 'Till within theſe forty-eight hours I have, rejecting all contradictions to ſuch an opinion, *thought* you what I wiſhed to find you; twelve hours ago I *hoped* it; and now I acknowledge with infinite concern, I *doubt* your proving ſo. I have been aſſured that you act with duplicity, and that your averſion to Lord Farnford is affected; an aſſurance which, though poſitive, I would not credit, were it not confirmed by your receiving him yeſterday evening in our abſence: it was to try whether you would ſo err that I left you, it grieves me to ſee my fears were well founded. I am alſo told that you have for ſome time been ſo far engaged to him as to make extricating yourſelf difficult; and that you endeavour to effect it, becauſe *there is a perſon, unworthy of your regard*, for whom you would readily ſacrifice every conſideration; that you are afraid of incenſing Lord Farnford by owning this the ground of your diſlike, and are in hopes to weary him. This intelligence, inconſiſtent with the candour and ingenuity

nuity I have obſerved in you, I would reject as falſe, and I would treat with equal contempt the ſequel of it, which diveſts you of every thing valuable in your compoſition, but that the perſon who informs me profeſſes friendſhip for you, and is well acquainted with the circumſtances of your family; I muſt therefore call on you to contradict it.

'In a letter which I received yeſterday morning, I am adviſed to favor Lord Farnford in order to preſerve you from the cenſure of the world; for that *after a reſidence with him at his country ſeat, and the intimacy obſervable between you*, hard judgments may perhaps be formed of your conduct. Do not imagine I give implicit credit to this vague charge; I will not ſuppoſe it founded in truth, nor would I mention it, were it not to make you aware of your danger. I have taken ſome pains to inquire into Lord Farnford's character; I learn that he is a favourite with the world, but a man of very looſe morals. For Heaven's ſake, my dear girl, retreat from this precipiece you ſtand on; you do not know half my fears and anxiety for you; perhaps your errors are the conſequence of a want of acquaintance with the arts of vice, I will not ſuppoſe you deficient in common prudence.

'I am ſcarcely conſcious of what I have written; however, I have eaſed my mind of a heavy load. Come to me, if you will truſt me with your confidence, come, and exculpate yourſelf from all accuſations and ſuſpicions. May the God of Heaven protect

protect you, and make me the means of relieving all your diſtreſſes.

Your ſincerely affectionate friend,

JANE AISTREY.'

Immediately as Conſtance had read this letter ſhe flew to Mrs. Aiſtrey's dreſſing-room, and found her there; though ſo perturbed as to be almoſt unable to articulate a word, ſhe thanked her for her candour, and promiſed to ſatisfy all her doubts. You ſhall not, replied her benevolent friend, be hurried by the fear of interruption; you and I will breakfaſt together here, and then you may at your leiſure reveal what you chuſe I ſhould know. She accordingly ſent to Mr. Aiſtrey, excuſing her abſence by ſaying ſhe and Miſs Fitzarthur being both indiſpoſed ſhould not breakfaſt with the family: this meſſage brought Miſs Aiſtrey to them. What two ſick folks? ſhe cried. Lord you'll be monſtrous dull without me:—come, let me make the tea for you,—no indeed Mary, replied her mother, you had better go and make your father's breakfaſt. Papa don't want me, returned his darling, he will have chocolate. Well then, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, I beg, if you breakfaſt here, you will leave us as ſoon as it is over, for I have ſome private buſineſs with Miſs Fitzarthur, and we wiſh not to be interrupted. The time ſpent in the young lady's company was as painful to her mother as to Conſtance: her tongue went inceſſantly, and Mrs. Aiſtrey was obliged to exert herſelf to check her diſpoſition to teaze

teaze Miſs Fitzarthur, who was not at all diſpoſed to reply to her impertinence.

When ſhe was gone, Mrs. Aiſtrey ſaid that, after the hint ſhe had given her, ſhe hoped they ſhould have no more viſits, and that nothing would now prevent her releaſe from the anxiety ſhe ſuffered.—Nothing ſhall prevent it, replied Conſtance: your friendly care for me deſerve every return I can make; the moſt unreſerved confidence is a ſmall proof of my eſteem and filial regard for you: you will blame my weakneſs; you will perhaps think me unworthy your attention: but do not quite exclude me from your pity; and, if I have been in any inſtance faulty, let what I have undergone be accepted as a part of my puniſhment. The tears ſtole from Mrs. Aiſtrey's eyes,—ſhe was attentive and ſilent; till perceiving Conſtance ſuddenly embarraſſed and confuſed, ſhe in the mildeſt terms tried to encourage her. Gracious Heaven! exclaimed Conſtance, what am I about to do? I am boudd by my promiſe not to reveal what I was on the point of telling you: I am ſo diſtracted I had totally forgotten it: I dare not break my word. Mrs. Aiſtrey aſked what promiſe bound her, and ſhe anſwered—one that Lord Farnford obtained from me. Has he ſo *much* power over you, ſaid Mrs Aiſtrey?—It was the only condition replied Conſtance, on which I could hope for ſecurity. And is this, ſaid her friend, ſuch a promiſe as keeps you entirely ſilent?—It keeps me ſilent, returned ſhe, where I ought to be moſt explicit for while I am

bound

bound by it, I cannot exculpate myſelf from the heavieſt part of what I am charged with. Surely, rejoined Mrs. Aiſtrey, it cannot wholly forbid your ſatisfying me in ſome particulars: I would on no account tempt you to depart from your word; what was your promiſe? repeat it. That I would not, Miſs Fitzarthur replied, by any means irritate you againſt Lord Farnford, and that I would not tell you the cauſe of my diſlike to him.—You may keep your promiſe ſacred, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, and yet in a great meaſure do what I wiſh: a ſingle negative or affirmative to a fair queſtion is all I deſire; and where that interferes with your engagement you are at liberty to decline anſwering: tell me therefore, does Lord Farnford honorably offer to marry you?—He does. And do you really, and from your heart diſlike the thoughts of being his wife?—Very much, and moſt heartily, Are you at liberty to ſay what it is that makes you refuſe ſo apparently advantageous an offer?—The certainty that I ſhould be miſerable with a man of his character. Is what I have heard true, that he is a man of looſe morals?—Yes. Why then do you ſee him?—He promiſed, if I would ſee him and behave to him as to an indifferent perſon, he would ceaſe importuning me. I am told, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, that this is not the true cauſe of your diſguſt, and that your behaviour to him has been very various.—It never, replied Conſtance, was ſuch as could reaſonably give him hopes: I have been too

credulous

credulous, and not ſufficiently ſteady; but I have always told him my genuine ſentiments, which never varied, with all poſſible frankneſs, and have done all in my power to diſcourage him. The true cauſe, returned Mrs. Aiſtrey, I am directed to think is an attachment to ſome other perſon, and this perſon is ſaid to be unworthy of your regard: now tell me ingenuouſly, is your affection or is it beſtowed on ſome one elſe?—Conſtance, ready to ſink at this inevitable queſtion, held down her head, and made no reply.

Your ſilence, reſumed Mrs. Aiſtrey, is as expreſſive as any thing you could ſay, and I conclude I am not miſinformed; yet ſurely, if your averſion for Lord Farnford has its foundation in his immorality, this perſon, whoever he is, if truly repreſented is as immoral, and ſhould therefore be, on the ſame ground, diſcarded: you cannot approve thatin the one which you condemn in the other: is he then truly or falſely repreſented when he is ſaid to be totally unworthy of your regard?

Theſe interrogatories which brought the moſt painful events of her life to her remembrance, Conſtance could not anſwer, and the tears guſhed from her eyes. I am ſorry to ſee you ſo diſtreſt, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, nothing but the hope either of promoting your happineſs or reſcuing you from danger, could make me thus inquiſitive, and my intention muſt excuſe it: however, I will not ſay any more. O madam, replied Conſtance, do not

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe I wiſh to conceal any thing from you: if I can get rid of my promiſe, there is nothing reſpecting my ſituation that you ſhould not know; could I get reſolution to tell you! Does the anſwering this queſtion, Mrs. Aiſtrey aſked, interfere with your promiſe?—No, returned ſhe, you ſhall be made acquainted with my weakneſs. I own that I would ſpare you all painful confeſſions, rejoined her friend: I only aſk whether the perſon ſo pointed out to me, is unworthy your regard? I do not wiſh to be told who he is; only ſatisfy me in this particular reſpecting him. I fear, anſwered Miſs Fitzarthur, her lips trembling and pale. that he is totally undeſerving of it. And would you, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, refuſe him on this account?—While I have reaſon to think as I do replied Conſtance, if it coſts me my life I will do it; but I am under no temptation to do otherwiſe: he has long deſerted me. Then I moſt ſincerely pity you, returned Mrs. Aiſtrey energetically. O no, madam, ſaid Conſtance, you ſhould deſpiſe ſuch weakneſs as mine; I was deceived, moſt cruelly impoſed on, and yet I cannot excite my reſentment againſt him who impoſed on me: I ſtill retain an affection for him, which entirely ruins my peace, and can ceaſe only with my life; and though I would refuſe him as I do Lord Farnford, it muſt be an eternal bar to my admitting any other attachment.

Poor girl, replied Mrs. Aiſtrey, you are unhappy indeed: I do not blame you,—I will pity you, and

as

as far as is poſſible, enable you to bear what is not to be remedied, with fortitude; there is only one point more I wiſh you to clear up. I told you I received a letter yeſterday, giving a ſtill more cogent reaſon for my not oppoſing Lord Farnford, and urging a heavier charge againſt you than any I ever heard; this letter though I am enjoined ſecreſy, you ſhall ſee; had it been written by any one who dared avow it, I ſhould have regarded the injunction as an obligation; as the author chuſes concealment, he muſt truſt wholly to that for protection againſt your reſentment, if the charges are not ſtrictly true. Your refuting them will make me completely happy as to this affair, and all that has paſſed will only raiſe my eſteem for you

She then gave Conſtance the letter which was written in an aukward hand, diſguiſed ſo that ſhe could not diſcover whoſe it was; it contained advice to Mrs. Aiſtrey to promote by all the means in her power the marriage of of lord Farnford with Miſs Fitzarthur, in the reaſons for which were included ſuch accuſations as Mrs. Aiſtrey had hinted at, but which were there expreſſed with exaggerated circumſtances, and much acrimony; yet there was through the whole ſuch a pretended regard for her, and ſuch a tnederneſs for her character, as might have deceived a perſon to whom it conveyed information; and an affected ſcrupuloſity leſt any thing doubtful might be conceived as aſſerted, and a deſire to ſcreen Miſs Fitzarthur,

while

while the writer mortally ſtabbed her reputation, gave ſo much the air of diſinteredneſs to the compoſition, as made it happy for Conſtance that it had fallen into the hands of a perſon whoſe prejudices were in her favour.

Mrs. Aiſtrey, when ſhe returned it, impatient to hear her vindication, told her ſhe would reſt her judgment on the anſwers ſhe would give to the facts aſſerted. They may, I think, ſaid ſhe, be reduced to theſe:—That there has been an unbecoming intimacy noticed by others between lord Farnford and yourſelf;—that you quitted town with him abruptly;—that you were with him ſome time in the country, and that he and you left Farnford Park under pretence of returning to Marſtonbury, inſtead of which you went together to a farm of his, where ſuch ladies as he could not introduce into his houſe had been received. Theſe, my dear unhappy girl, are ſuch charges, as nothing leſs than poſitive contradiction can ſerve againſt; with reſpect to the firſt, indeed it muſt be left to the judgment of others; what ſome may call an *improper* intimacy might be hamleſs; but a reſidence with ſuch a man as Lord Farnford is reported to be, nothing can excuſe; ignorance of his character would not be ſufficient, if it was under ſuch circumſtances as are implied, I will not believe you could ſo err; ſome intereſted perſon would impoſe a falſhood on me; but I am too well aſſured of your prudence to think you could ſo

diſregard propriety; your ſilence ſhall paſs for a negative; the charge is I am convinced, groundleſs, and the malicious attempt ſhall not only fall ſhort of the purpoſe it was deſigned to ſerve, but it ſhall be forced to contribute to a better, that of convincing me how ſuperior your conduct is to ſuch attacks.

Conſtance was now placed in an embarraſſing ſituation; if ſhe ſuffered Mrs. Aiſtrey to remain in her benevolent error, ſhe was acceſſary to deceiving her, if ſhe corrected her, ſhe muſt render herſelf ſuſpected, as ſhe could not without violating her promiſe exculpate herſelf; chuſing rather to take the load of apparent guilt on herſelf, than to gain a reinſtatement in her good opinion either by impoſition or treachery, ſhe told her that, however advantageous her diſpoſition towards her was, ſhe could not improve it by miſleading her. What I am accuſed of ſaid ſhe, though ſhamefully magnified, is not without foundation, and I am peculiarly unhappy in being deprived of the means of accounting for what appears criminal; all I did I can ſafely aſſert, was perfectly innocent; but all I could ſay, unleſs I were at liberty to reveal the whole, would not perſuade even *you* that I was not very guilty.—And is it poſſible; interrupted Mrs. Aiſtrey, that the contents of this letter are true?—Not *ſtrictly* true, Conſtance anſwered, it is very artfully written, and truth and falſhood are ſo blended, that it is difficult to ſeparate them.—And

do

do you confeſs, Mrs. Aiſtrey aſked, that there was the intimacy hinted at betweeen you and Lord Farnford? From that, ſaid Conſtance, I can clear myſelf: he ſpent much of his time at Mrs. Stavenell's while I was there, and ſome degree of intimacy could not be avoided; when I found that his attention to me was particular and remarked, I was as cautious and reſerved as I could be, conſiſtently with good manners. Well, interrupted Mrs. Aiſtrey, this is the leaſt part: did you leave town abruptly with him?—I went, ſaid ſhe, at his deſire and my aunt's, with him and his ſiſters: I was to have gone in a few days to Marſtonbury, and he took me, and promiſed to leave me at my father's. And did you, Mrs. Aiſtrey continued, go to Farnford Park, and remain there?—I ſlept there, ſhe replied, one night; an accident obliged us to go there inſtead of going to Marſtonbury.

She did not dare to tell the reaſon given her, as ſhe had found it falſe, and Mrs. Aiſtrey, who lived in the neighbourhood, would not only have detected it, but imagined it originated with her. All this, ſaid Mrs Aiſtrey, might be accounted for, and there is nothing criminal in it; but if it is true that you went thence, accompanied only by Lord Farnford, and that inſtead of going on to Marſtonbury, you ſtopt, as I think this letter ſays, a day and a night at one of his farms, I know not what excuſe to frame by which I could juſtify acquitting you. Conſider, Miſs Fitzarthur, what you are charged with;

with; ſurely you do not underſtand it, or you would, I am convinced, contradict it. That, replied Conſtance, without a violation of the truth I cannot do, and ſorry as I am to remain a moment ſuſpected by ſo kind a friend, I muſt acknowledge that I did what I am ſaid to have done, and defer vindicating my conduct till I have ſeen Lord Farnford; perhaps he will abſolve me from my engagement when he knows to what an extremity I am driven: it is moſt unwillingly that I think of aſking a favour of him, yet I muſt do it, for I have no other way of exculpating myſelf. Could I hope, madam, that you would ſuſpend your opinion till I am at liberty to ſay more, I ſhould be leſs unhappy; the moſt I can expect is that you will ſuffer your judgment to be corrected, and I muſt wait till he comes here again.

I fear, ſaid Mrs. Aiſtrey, that I could derive very little ſatisfaction from his diſpenſing with your promiſe. I told you I reſted my determination on facts, and this point, if I am not deceived, cannot be extenuated: you have certainly expoſed yourſelf to cenſure, and I own I think that perſon your friend who adviſes the match. The ſtrange mixture of integrity, and, I muſt ſay, weakneſs in your character, puzzles me exceſſively: at a time when you confeſs an act which would ruin any young woman in the eſtimation of the world, I ſee you ſtrictly adhering to truth and to a religious obſervance of your promiſe. I have been little uſed

either to practice or encounter deceit, therefore am unable to judge whether your behaviour is calculated to ſerve ſome purpoſes of your own, or is the effect of obligations you are under to be ſilent: remember, however, there is one with whom no deceit will avail; who ſees, not only our actions, but the motives to them: to oppoſe my intentions is, if you believe me intereſted for you, to oppoſe him; conſider then whether you had not better, by acquainting me with the particulars of your ſituation, enable me to protect you if you have not erred, or to ſecure you from future danger.

It is, replied Conſtance, the certainty that no ſubterfuge, no deceit will avail me, that makes me chuſe to take on myſelf this load of ſuppoſed guilt, rather than to avoid it by contradicting the charge. I hope, madam, my conduct appears at leaſt as inconſiſtent with criminality as with innocence; if I had wiſhed rather to evade than, remove your ſuſpicion, a negative would have obtained an acquittal from you; the implicit confidence you had in me made it very eaſy to deceive you; but can you think I would have acknowledged, and inſiſted on the truth of what is alledged againſt me, if I had not been certain I could, if not juſtify, excuſe what I have done?

While Conſtance ſpoke, Mrs. Aiſtrey looked attentively at her, and when ſhe ceaſed, ſaid: a ſuppoſition has occurred to me which will almoſt effectually reconcile what I have heard from you, and

what

what I have learnt from the writer of this letter; and it will account for part of what Lord Farnford ſaid: hear me patiently, I do not aſk for an anſwer, becauſe the engagement you are under implies the impropriety of a confeſſion. I will believe, and I am ſorry to believe it, becauſe you muſt be very wretched, that you do not like Lord Farnford, yet I am firmly perſuaded you are his wife: you are privately married; but then why is the perſon who wrote to me kept ignorant of it? This erroneous and yet not abſurd opinion drew a ſmile from Miſs Fitzarthur, and ſhe anſwered: Wretched I am, but that, indeed madam, is a miſery I have eſcaped. You are very good to think any thing more probable than my deſerving cenſure—I aſſure you, on my honour, that I am not married, nor am I ſo criminal as that would make me, for it would have been criminal to have married a man I have uniformly, from the firſt hour I ſaw him, hated.—Do, dear madam, only ſuſpend your judgment, and I will try to get leave to ſatisfy you. It is as difficult as painful replied Mrs. Aiſtrey, to think ill of you, I will do as you deſire, and as you are aware of the ineffıcacy of deceit, truſt to your aſſurances that you can ſatisfy me. When you ſee Lord Farnford, repreſent to him the difficulty you are involved in, and I cannot doubt he will readily conſent to releaſing you, for he ſeems immoderately fond of you. Conſtance thanked Mrs. Aiſtrey for her kindneſs, and they parted.

CHAP. XX.

SARCASM.

EVERY minute of this day that Conſtance could be abſent from the family, ſhe employed in thinking how ſhe could contrive to ſee Lord Farnford, for ſhe could hardly bear with patience to wai for a chance viſit; ſhe determined ſeveral times to write to him, and was firm in her reſolution till it was to be put in practice, when ſhe always found in herſelf an inſurmountable repugnance to addreſſing him, and therefore was obliged to give up this method: ſhe then thought of deſiring Mrs Aiſtrey to aſk him to call there, but this ſhe feared he would conſtrue into an invitation from herſelf; the meaſure was on that account rejected; and at laſt, after much deliberation, ſhe preferred waiting for his accidental coming, which ſhe ſuppoſed would be in a day or two. Mrs. Aiſtrey behaved to her with the greateſt tenderneſs, ſhe neither ſaid or did any thing that indicated impatience; on the contrary, as if ſhe knew that what ſhe was to hear, would corroborate her good opinion of her gueſt,

ſhe ſeemed perfectly at eaſe, and ſatisfied. Conſtance could not boaſt equal tranquillity; her ſpirits, now habitually low, were agitated by ſuſpence, and ſhe was in a ſituation which ſhe could not have believed any concatenation of events would have led her into, that of uneaſineſs becauſe Lord Farnford was abſent.

The next morning he called, and the ſight of his carriage, for the firſt time rejoiced Miſs Fitzarthur. Mrs. Aiſtrey was with her above ſtairs when he came, and Mr. Aiſtrey, who with his daughter was in the parlour, ſent up to inform them of his arrival. He prevented their requeſting to ſee him where they were, by coming to them, and the fortunate entry of a viſitor to Miſs Aiſtrey, and a perſon on buſineſs to her father, removed every impediment to Conſtance's wiſh. She heſitated whether ſhe ſhould ſpeak before Mrs. Aiſtrey, or in private with his lordſhip, the former of which ſhe choſe, leſt ſhe ſhould for a moment give him any hopes: as ſoon therefore as the uſual formalities were over, ſhe told him that ſhe was under a neceſſity of aſking ſuch a favour, as nothing leſs than the dilemma ſhe was in could excuſe. Lord Farnford exulting in the imaginary ſuperiority, which her being reduced to make a requeſt gave him over one to whom he had ſo often been forced to yield, aſked her, in a tone of jocularity, how ſhe could expect him to deviate from the example ſhe had ſet before him.—You, ſaid he, have always refuſed *my* petitions:

do you think I ſhall more readily comply with *your's*: I will not however remember injuries, we are friends now, and all animoſities ſhould be forgotten: tell me how I can ſerve you. She then conciſely ſtated her difficulty, and begged him to diſpenſe with her promiſe.—And ſo, ſaid he, affecting to laugh, you wiſh to ſet Mrs. Aiſtrey and me at variance.—By no means, anſwered Conſtance, I only wiſh after having repreſented that which muſt inſure you her good opinion, to be at liberty to exculpate myſelf, which I cannot do while bound by my promiſe. I would adviſe you, returned he, to wave your requeſt--Why? ſhe aſked. Becauſe, replied he my complying with it will involve you ſtill farther.—How is that poſſible? ſaid Conſtance; Mrs. Aiſtrey has heard that I left Mrs. Stavenell's with you, and is acquainted in general with the circumſtances of our journey; they have been ſo repreſented to her as to make an explanation of them neceſſary, and for this purpoſe, giving you my word that it ſhall be productive of no inconvenience to you, I deſire my ſhackles may be taken off: a natural love of juſtice ought to prevail with you; if you cannot truſt me, tell her yourſelf what paſſed between my leaving London and arriving at Marſtonbury.—I cannot, he anſwered: you travelled ſome part of the way, if not alone, without me, therefore I am not qualified for a journaliſt.

All that Conſtance could ſay to perſuade Lord Tarntord ſhe ſaid; but he only laughed at her: at length

length he told her there was one condition on which he would indulge her; she desired to know what it was, and he replied.—Now you must release me from my promise, before I can tell you: I will not puzzle you to find out what I mean, and that I may not break my word, it is sufficient to say that the request you make shall be granted to none but Lady Farnford. Constance understood his Lordship too well to need a commentary; she was disconcerted at the intimation, and heartily vexed at his obstinacy: she gave up, and Mrs. Aistrey interposed, stating what she had heard, the suspicions excited by such reports, and the injustice of depriving Miss Fitzarthur of the power of defending herself: he still remained inflexible, and as this was to be the only subject of discussion he rose to go. Constance now insisted on his assigning some reason for his refusal, as Mrs. Aistrey might, without it, suppose it concerted between them.—I cannot believe, said he, that Mrs. Aistrey is so suspicious as you represent her, nor can I think you need to be told why I refused; however, since you will have a reason you shall: I have too great a regard for the honour of your family to put it in your power to do yourself mischief: the favours I have received from you I shall always remember, and gratefully acknowledge, but I never mean to publish them. He then hastily quitted the room, leaving her whom he so injuriously treated, in amazement at his artful ma-

lice, and her friend ſhocked by the reaſon he had aſſigned.

When he was gone, Conſtance told Mrs. Aiſtrey that this was the only hope ſhe had of clearing herſelf, and that, as Lord Farnford's obſtinacy had deprived her of it, and his wicked inſinuation muſt have rendered her ſtill more ſuſpected, ſhe would not tax her with unkindneſs if ſhe withdrew the whole of her regard.—That, ſhe replied, I ſhould moſt reluctantly be forced to, I will yet ſuſpend my judgment. I diſcovered ſo much malice in his anſwer to you, that I am inclined to think he has the moſt cauſe to fear a diſcovery: perhaps he may yet be prevailed on if this is intimated to him; for his own honour, and leſt more ſhould be ſuſpected than he really deſerves, he may do what we wiſh: I will try what I can do ſome time when you are not by, and I believe I can ſucceed at leaſt to my own ſatisfaction.

The uneaſineſs which ſuch incredible obſtinacy and malice occaſioned Conſtance, was in a great meaſure leſſened by Mrs. Aiſtrey's diſpoſition to turn, even that which appeared moſt unfavourable, to her advantage; but ſhe was much hurt by this farther aſſurance of Lord Farnford's entire want of principle; ſhe again conſidered him as a man ſhe could not truſt, and was convinced that no farther than his intereſt and inclination led him, would he go: ſhe had now no means of juſtifying her conduct; as to engage any one to give Mrs, Aiſtrey the

the ſatisfaction ſhe was obliged to withhold, would be an infringement on her promiſe. Sometimes ſhe inclined to inform Mr. Stavenell, who was abſent from London, of her ſituation, and deſire him to uſe his intereſt with Lord Farnford, but this ſhe feared would produce a family quarrel, as ſhe knew pretty well Mrs. Stavenell's partiality for his lordſhip, and that ſhe would ſupport him; to oblige her ſon to act openly in oppoſition to her, conſidering his great reſpect for her, ſhe ſaw muſt diſtreſs him, and therefore ſhe would not do it.

Thus unaided by all, ſhe was again driven to patience and ſubmiſſion, her health was viſibly affected, ſhe ſpent much of her time alone, and declined ſeeing the viſitors to the family. She wiſhed to leave Mrs. Aiſtrey, and yet could not determine to quit her before ſhe was ſatisfied with reſpect to theſe unfortunate circumſtances. Neither Mr. Aiſtrey nor his daughter knew what had happened; the former, finding his wit had no effect, neglected her, and conſidered her as a poor low-ſpirited creature; and the latter having diſcovered that their tempers were not congenial, left her to her mother, and purſued pleaſure without her. There was therefore only one perſon who ſymphthiſed in her diſtreſs, and that was ſhe on whoſe account ſhe was diſtreſſed: Mrs. Stavenell took no notice of her, Mr. Stavenell was from home; and conſcious that Lady Barbara could not relieve her, ſhe had uniformly forborne mentioning in her letters that any thing made her unhappy; ſhe had told her of her agreement with

Lord Farnford, and could not conceal Mrs. Stavenell's behaviour; but ſhe repreſented her ſituation as pleaſant, and ſaid whatever could ſet her mother's heart at reſt. Her ſuffering ſeemed to have the ſame effect on Mrs. Aiſtrey that ſhe hoped from Lord Farnford's releaſing her: ſhe gave her every aſſurance of her confidence; but Conſtance was ſo born down by a variety of misfortunes that ſhe was incapable of conſolation. In the courſe of the enſuing week Lord Farnford called two or three times, and ſhe refuſed to ſee him; he however continued his viſits, and Mrs. Aiſtrey improved every opportunity of repreſenting to him how great an injury he was doing Miſs Fitzarthur, but to no purpoſe.

CHAP. XXI.

ACCIDENT.

ONE day when Conſtance's ſpirits were at the loweſt. Mrs. Aiſtrey's maid came to her room and told her a young woman waited to ſpeak with her; ſhe was dreſſing, and could not immediately

ſee

ſee her, but in leſs than a quarter of an hour ſhe went down, and found the perſon to whom ſhe was called was no other than the niece of Lord Farnford's tenant, at whoſe houſe ſhe had been detained. Surprize, joy, gratitude for her kind aſſiſtance, and the moſt painful remembrance, almoſt overcame Miſs Fitzarthur; a few minutes compoſed her, and ſhe learnt that Suſan being coming to town to ſee her mother, had enquired at Marſtonbury where ſhe might find Conſtance. Mrs. Aiſtrey, ever attentive to the convenience of others, Soon left them, and Suſan related what had paſſed immediately after the ſucceſs of her plan. She ſaid that as ſoon as Lord Farnford roſe in the morning, he ſent her aunt to knock at Miſs Fitzarthur's door: on her returning and ſaying ſhe did not anſwer, he concluded ſhe was ſtill aſleep, and waited till near eleven o'clock; that he then ſent again, when receiving no ſatisfaction, he grew alarmed, and ordered the door to be forced open, and her aunt to go in: that on the diſcovery that ſhe was gone, his rage was dreadful, till after ſome time he ſuddenly became calm, and ſolemnly ſwore that though ſhe had eſcaped now, it ſhould be to no purpoſe, for that ſome way or other his ſcheme ſhould ſucceed. She ſaid that the ſuſpicion of having aſſiſted Miſs Fitzarthur immediately fell on her, and that, being charged with it, ſhe confeſſed it, knowing it was not in Lord Farnford's power to revenge himſelf; that in a few days after, as her aunt continued very

angry, ſhe left the houſe, and had married the man whom ſhe had engaged to execute her deſign.

It gave Conſtance greater pleaſure than ſhe had for many months experienced, to ſee again one who had ſo eſſentially ſerved her, nor did the joy of her viſitor ſeem leſs: after many apologies for the liberty ſhe had taken, ſhe was going, when Mrs. Aiſtrey came in, and deſired Miſs Fitzarthur would ſo far think herſelf at home, as to invite the young woman to call as often as ſhe choſe, urging at the ſame time, with peculiar kindneſs, her taking ſome refreſhment. Suſan excuſed herſelf, as her ſtay in London was ſhort, and ſhe had much to do, and preſently took her leave. The moment ſhe was gone, Mrs. Aiſtrey, with delight in her countenance, aſked Conſtance if her viſitor had told her of the converſation they had had while they waited for her; ſhe anſwered in the negative, and Mrs. Aiſtrey ſaid;—Come, ſit down, and you ſhall hear what has paſſed; and learn by it that Providence will not permit innocence long to ſuffer. Nothing Lord Farnford could have ſaid would have given me half the ſatisfaction I have received from this ſimple creature: he has been here, and ſhe came in at the inſtant that he was going out of the room. I believe he did not ſee her, or at leaſt he did not recollect her, for he took no notice of her: as ſoon as ſhe had ſat down ſhe aſked me if that was not Lord Farnford:—I anſwered that it was: ſhe ſhook her head as if ſhe was ſorry to ſee him, and ſaid ſhe thought it was he, for that *he al-*

ways

ways put her in a tremble. This, as you may imagine raiſed my curioſity; I aſked her what cauſe ſhe had to tremble at ſeeing him, and I learnt from her the outrageous injury he had offered you, and the manner of your eſcaping him. This, my deareſt girl, has rendered all he can ſay, were he ever ſo diſpoſed to do you juſtice, unneceſſary for your vidication. I was not deceived in imagining he had cogent reaſons for obliging you to ſecrecy, and I am infinitely happy in having forborne to paſs any cenſure on one ſo innocent and ſo ill-treated.

Conſtance regarded this event as the interpoſition of heaven, and ſhe was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude to that power who had in all exigencies protected her. When the firſt effuſions were over, her delighted friend recollected that ſhe had a note for her: Lord Farnford after trying to perſuade her to ſend for Conſtance, finding ſhe perſiſted in her being too low to bear company, had written his buſineſs, and left it for her: it was this:

"My dear Madam,

"*Your* part of the agreement was that if I for-
"bore ſpeaking on one ſubject, you would admit
"me to ſee you:—*mine* that if you did ſo, I would
"ſuffer in ſilence.—*I* have not broken *my* engage-
"ment—aſk yourſelf if you can ſay ſo.——

"Your very humble Servant.

"FARNFORD."

This laconic epiſtle Conſtance immediately ſhew-to Mrs. Aiſtrey. It was ſettled between them that, in

in order to avoid uſeleſsly irritating Lord Farnford, which might provoke him to harraſs her, ſhe ſhould not refuſe to ſee him: her ceaſing to urge him on the ſubject of her requeſt he could not trace to its real cauſe, and they determined to keep the ſatisfaction they had received a ſecret: accordingly the next time he came, Miſs Fitzarthur appeared, and endeavoured by her behaviour to ſhew that as ſhe had no reaſon to fear him, ſhe deſpiſed ſhunning him: he ſeemed very well pleaſed with what he thought the effect of his reminding her, and having obtained all he had a right to expect, he was, at leaſt to external obſervation, contented.

The enſuing fortnight was by far the pleaſanteſt interval Conſtance had known while at Mr. Aiſtrey's. The friendſhip ſhe experienced from Mrs. Aiſtrey ſhe requited by intruſting her with her confidence; ſhe told her how Mrs. Stavenell had behaved to her, with all the events from the time of her firſt quitting Marſtonbury, concealing nothing, except Lord Calorne's name: in exchange for this communication ſhe received conſolation and encouragement: Mrs. Aiſtrey taught her to extract good from her misfortunes; and though ſhe felt, as ſenſibly as friendſhip demanded, for her affliction, ſhe ſo far fortified her mind, that in a ſhort time ſhe could think of the impoſition under which ſhe ſuffered, and hear it ſpoken of with diminiſhed agitation. Mrs. Aiſtrey never attempted to talk her out of her regard for him who had ſo wantonly raiſed and ſo cruelly

cruelly disappointed her expectations, she perceived her affection for him was fixed, and therefore rather endeadeavoured to balance than remove it: she succeeded so well that Miss Fitzarthur's health mended daily, her spirits were composed, and

'O'er her mild manners, by no art constrain'd,
A pensive pleasing melancholy reign'd,
Which won regard, and charm'd th' attentive eye
Like the soft lustre of an evening sky.'

As she behaved to Lord Farnford in the same manner as to Captain Berneil and the other gentlemen who visited at the house, Mr. Aistrey's wit and raillery wanted a subject, and he had nothing to remark: his daughter seemed to promise herself much pleasure from this alteration in Constance, and so much, though by different means, did those to whom she was a guest, study her gratification, that had it not been for Mr. Stavenell's quitting England to go on the West India station, this period would have been unmarked by any occasion of regret.

It happened one day that the two young ladies were left for some time together, and on Constance remarking to her companion her extraordinary disposition to sit still, she replied that she had something which she wished very much to say to her: —but, said she, I cannot tell it you, if you don't promise nobody shall know it. Constance declined being intrusted with any secret, reminding Miss Aistrey that she had before told her how unwilling

she

ſhe was to undertake ſuch a charge: Miſs however perſiſted, and ſaid that ſhe was ſure, when ſhe knew telling it would ruin her, ſhe would not do it. Without any farther encouragement ſhe proceeded to inform Miſs Fitzarthur, that ſome months before, ſhe had met at the houſe of a relation, a gentleman of whoſe perſon and manners ſhe gave ſuch a deſcription, as left no room to doubt of what ſpecies the grand ſecret was: with this gentleman ſhe appeared to have been ſuddenly captivated, and by her account he was no leſs enamoured of her; but ſome circumſtances on his part made it neceſſary that all intercourſe between them ſhould be clandeſtine. From this Conſtance augured no good, yet in the hope that ſhe might be able to ſerve her friend's daughter eſſentially, though not perhaps in the moſt agreeable way to her, ſhe liſtened with attention to the narrative. It came out that a regular private correſpondence had been kept up, that they did not meet, leſt they might excite ſuſpicion, and that her lover had in all his letters, urged her to conſent to that, which ſhe did not even profeſs to diſlike, a ſtolen marriage. Conſtance was aſtoniſhed to find that this ſilly young woman had proceeded ſo far on a really very ſlight acquaintance: for her knowledge of the perſon was no more than her being one week a gueſt in the ſame houſe with him, afforded her, and her ſurprize was increaſed when ſhe learnt that he had been for two months ſilent on the ſubject of his paſſion; ſhe nevertheleſs determined

determined to hear patiently the reſt of this intereſting detail, and then to uſe every argument that could diſſuade her from continuing ſo diſhonourable an intercourſe. Miſs Aiſtrey ſoon taught her that ſhe was not induced to this confidence by the hope of profiting from her advice, but of rendering her ſerviceable to her; and with all the art ſhe was miſtreſs of, ſhe endeavoured to prevail on her to promiſe, without knowing what ſhe meant to aſk, that ſhe would grant her one requeſt: ſo unreaſonable a ſolicitation was not to be complied with; ſhe, however aſſured her of her acquieſcence in any thing that was for the advantage of one to whoſe family ſhe had obligations, and on this Miſs Aiſtrey relied, conſtruing it in her own favour: ſhe told her that ſhe had the day before agreed to leave her father's houſe with the gentleman who had been the ſubject of their converſation, and the favour ſhe had to aſk was, that they might exchange rooms for that night, as he had promiſed to be ready to carry her off before day-light, and the ſignal was to be given at the front window.

Here Miſs Aiſtrey ſtopt, excepting an anſwer; but her true friend improved the opportunity of repreſenting, before it was too late, the dangerous hazard ſhe ran. She deſired her to conſider how imperfect a knowledge ſhe had of him for whoſe ſake ſhe was about to forfeit the affection of her father and mother, and imagining, by the manner of conducting this buſineſs, that the gentleman feared

feared a refuſal if he avowed himſelf, ſhe owned her apprehenſions that they were lucrative conſiderations which tempted him to ſuch diſhonorable means of obtaining her; but what was Conſtance's ſurprize and confuſion when this adventrous lady, to remove all ſuſpicion that the object of her love was of a rank inferior to her own, with confidence and exultation informed her, that he was Lord Ormington's ſon, Lord Calorne! She was ſo confounded that ſhe could not reſume the converſation, and truſting to the interval before night for time to recollect herſelf and reſolve what to do, ſhe agreed to the propoſition of exchanging rooms, and then made an excuſe to get away from her companion.

It required not much deliberation to determine what courſe ſhe ſhould take; gratitude and friendſhip pointed out the propriety of making Mrs. Aiſtrey acquainted with a ſcheme which ſo nearly concerned her. That ſhe might diſcharge this duty ſhe ſuppreſt as they roſe all the emotions which the intelligence ſhe had received excited; ſhe would not ſuffer a thought for herſelf to intrude into her mind, but endeavouring to forget that ſhe was at all intereſted in the affair, or that it reſpected any any one who was not a total ſtranger to her, ſhe waited impatiently for two o'clock when Miſs Aiſtrey was going out, that ſhe might communicate what ſhe had heard to her mother.

As ſoon as ſhe was gone, Conſtance went to Mrs. Aiſtrey, who was writing in the parlour: her countenance

countenance betrayed uncommon diſorder, and attracted obſervation; ſhe owned ſomething had diſturbed her and, after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe, as briefly as ſhe could, related what ſhe had learnt, at which Mrs. Aiſtrey was more grieved than ſurpriſed, as this information would have been rendered nugatory by any injunction to ſecreſy, ſhe concluded it by ſaying that, whatever were the inconveniences that might follow to herſelf, ſhe begged all poſſible uſe might be made of the communication; an inſtance of generoſity which Mrs. Aiſtrey admired yet heſitated to take advantage of, till Conſtance inſiſting on her profiting by it, and repreſenting to her that there was nothing to fear from the anger of the parties, prevailed on her to tell Mr. Aiſtrey as ſoon as he came home, that the miſchief might be immediately prevented: ſhe therefore did ſo, and could not at firſt gain credit; but, when he was convinced, he was half mad with rage. After ſome time allowed for his fury to evaporate in ſoliloquy and exclamation, his wife propoſed ſitting up and ſurpriſing their daughter in the moment of her eſcape; a delay to which he could not ſubmit: he would take no advice, he would hear nobody; he could do nothing but rave, and threaten the raſcal who meant to ſteal his Polly.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

ELOQUENCE.

MISS AISTREY returned home to dinner, and at the moment of her entrance her father met her and brought her into the parlour, where were his wife and Conſtance: he then began intimidating her hy threats, and inſiſted in the moſt furious manner on knowing from herſelf the truth of what he had heard. Heartily lamenting the diſtreſs ſhe had, though neceſſarily occaſioned, and grieved for Miſs Aiſtrey, Conſtance now almoſt repented what ſhe had done; but her concern was much abated when Miſs Aiſtrey confidently denied that ſhe had any ſuch intention, and ſaid that Miſs Fitzarthur had miſunderſtood her: her father was evidently inclined to credit her; and, with pretended reſentment of the injury done her, ſhe bounced out of the room, and flew up ſtairs.

Mr. Aiſtrey, as might be expected, began vehemently to reproach Conſtance, till his wife interpoſing, urged that their daughter was entitled to no more than an equal degree of belief with Miſs Fitzarthur,

arthur, and therefore, unleſs ſome other perſon ſupported one of them, no judgment ought to be formed: he then reſolved on ſending to Lord Calorne, a meaſure which Mrs. Aiſtrey did not approve; but nothing could prevail on him to take any other means for information; his reſentment had totally ſubſided, and his intereſt was now what he conſidered! he was perſuaded that, if it were true, Lord Calorne muſt be violently in love with his daughter, and as his heart was ſet on diſpoſing of her to the beſt bidder, he hinted that his purpoſe in ſeeing him was to remove all impediments; he valued himſelf on his knowledge of the world, thought himſelf uncommonly ſagacious, and diſpatched an extremely civil requeſt to Lord Calorne that he would do him the honor to call on him on an affair of importance.

Dinner, which had waited a conſiderable time, was now ſerved up, and Miſs Aiſtrey was called; but ſhe, affecting great indignation, deſired to be excuſed, for that ſhe was too much diſturbed by what had been ſaid of her to eat. Her father, as if her innocence had been already proved, in terms of pity for her, and reproach of Miſs Fitzarthur, expreſt his concern at her abſence. Their meal, which was paſſed in ſilence, was ſoon ended, and Conſtance went up to the injured lady to inquire whether ſhe meant to perſiſt in the falſity, ſhe had aſſerted: the door was locked, ſhe would not open

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it, and anſwered the requeſt to be admitted by ſaying ſhe did not chuſe to ſee any body.

The perturbation of Conſtance's ſpirits was, in the degree, new to her: to have her veracity queſtioned; to be ſuppoſed the fabricator of an untruth, wanton, as from the ſucceſs of it ſhe could never hope to derive advantage, and malicious, as it would ruin the perſon againſt whom it was levelled, was a ſituation intolerably humiliating; yet this was not all: how was ſhe to meet Lord Calorne? how could ſhe bear to be his accuſer? to be confronted with him? and, for her neceſſary juſtification, to repeat what ſhe had ſaid, without diſcovering her feelings? ſhe had concealed his name from Mrs. Aiſtrey in relating her own ſtory, but, when ſhe was to warn her of her daughter's ſcheme, to have done ſo would have been, if not impoſſible, improper: ſhe now ſo far doubted her fortitude that ſhe was inclined to tell Mrs. Aiſtrey that he it was who had ſo cruelly deſerted her, and for whom ſhe ſo ſuffered, in order to avoid ſeeing him; for ſhe knew her friend's deſire to ſpare others pain, would induce her by ſome method or other to diſpenſe with her perſonal attendance; but conſidering afterwards if Lord Calorne ſhould, as he was diſcovered, immediately confeſs his intention, or if he ſhould not come, her caution was needleſs, and above all, any thing that reſembled flying from detection; ſhe determined to ſtand her ground, and rather to truſt

truſt theſe poſſibilities than to put in practice the method ſhe at firſt thought of.

In about an hour the ſervant returned with an anſwer from Lord Calorne, that he would be in Bedford-row about eight o'clock that evening. The intermediate time Conſtance ſpent with Mrs. Aiſtrey, for ſhe found meditation on the ſubject no increaſe of her courage; and was pleaſed to be aſſured that ſhe did not doubt the truth of what ſhe had heard, nor that her daughter had, in denying it, uttered a groſs falſity: ſhe expreſſed her ſenſe of the obligation ſhe was under to Miſs Fitzarthur who had ſo expoſed herſelf to ſave a part of her family, and commended in the warmeſt terms of approbation this ſingular act of generoſity. Thus by one party Conſtance was reproached and diſcredited, by the other ſhe was believed and encouraged.

The utmoſt exertion was almoſt too little to conceal her intereſt in this affair, nor could ſhe perhaps have done it, had ſhe not been aided by recollecting that revealing it would ſubject her communication to be attributed to pique, reſentment, and jealouſy: as theſe were not the motives from which ſhe acted, ſhe could not venture to be ſo ſuſpected, and though Mrs. Aiſtrey always put the moſt favorable conſtruction on indifferent things, ſhe feared none, except thoſe who knew her heart, could perfectly acquit her. In order to fortify herſelf againſt any trial ſhe might be to undergo, ſhe conſidered how greatly this newly-diſcovered intrigue added to the baſeneſs

of

of Lord Calorne's character: he kept a miſtreſs, he had addreſſed Conſtance as if he ſeriouſly intended marrying her, he had impoſed on her and deſerted her; he had then entered into another matrimonial negotiation with Miſs Ecklow, and now he had prevailed on a thoughtleſs half-witted girl, whom, as he was already engaged, it was ſcarcely probable he intended for his wife, to leave her friends, forfeit her character, and become his dupe.

At a little after eight he came, and Mrs. Aiſtrey retired with Conſtance, leaving the drawing room for the gentlemen; where they were they could overhear all that was ſaid, and Mrs. Aiſtrey liſtened with anxiety for the queſtion which was to determine whether her daughter had been falſely aſperſed: her companion dreaded to hear Lord Calorne's voice, and yet it was impoſſible to avoid it in their ſituation: they heard him aſk what was the buſineſs that required his preſence, and Mr. Aiſtrey reply that the buſineſs was a matter of great importance to him; that if matters turned out as he dared to ſay they would, he did not ſee any great objection, but that he liked to have things fair and above board: that if his lordſhip's affairs obliged him to keep any thing ſecret, he would not inſiſt on what perhaps ſome folks might expect: and that, as he now knew he was inclined to favour him, he deſired him to be open, and tell him why he had gone ſuch a round-about way to work.

Had

Had Conſtance been unintereſted, ſhe could have joined Mrs. Aiſtrey's not-to-be-ſtifled laugh at this exordium: but ſhe was in an univerſal tremor, dreading the moment when ſhe ſhould be called to ſupport what ſhe had ſaid. Lord Calorne now declared his inability to underſtand what Mr. Aiſtrey meant, and begged an explanation: Ah ha! ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, my lord, you're afraid to truſt us old folks: you won't ſuppoſe I know what's going forwards. I dare ſay you both thought yourſelves pure ſafe, and then when all was over, you thought it was only aſking pardon, and then all would be ſtrait again: Indeed, I don't know, my lord, that I ſhall have any objection; only you ſee its beſt to look before you leap, and go on fair and ſoftly.

His oration was interrupted by Lord Calorne, who with greater earneſtneſs deſired to know his meaning, What, anſwered Mr. Aiſtrey, you can't gueſs I've found you out! Pray, my lord, does n't your lordſhip know my daughter, Miſs Aiſtrey? I believe, ſaid Lord Calorne, after a ſhort ſilence, it muſt be your daughter that I met laſt ſummer on a viſit, I remember a young lady of that name, and I heard ſhe lived in this part of the town. And is that all you know of her, my lord? ſaid her father. Nearly all, Lord Calorne replied, I do not recollect having ſeen her ſince, or if I have—No, no, interrupted Mr. Aiſtrey, I know you wou'dn't ſee her for fear of being ſuſpected. Oh! you was very cautious; you managed nicely. I muſt beg, Sir,

ſaid his lordſhip in a louder tone of voice, that you will explain yourſelf; I fear I lie under ſome very unjuſt ſuſpicion, or you have miſtaken the perſon you ſent for. No miſtake at all, my lord, replied Mr. Aiſtrey, nor no unjuſt ſuſpicion: I tell you, my lord, again and again, I have no ſort of objection; but I hate run-away matches. Run-away matches! Lord Calorne repeated; Sir, do you ſuſpect that I deſigned to have run away with your daughter?—Ay, certainly I do, Mr. Aiſtrey anſwered,—why not?—ſhe's a monſtrous fine girl, and I can give her 30,000l. any day of the week; and if you liked her and cou'dn't get her without, I don't ſay you was much to blame.

Whatever may be your opinion, Sir, replied Lord Calorne, I ſhould think myſelf very much to blame if I had intended ſuch an injury to you, and ſo ſcandalous a theft: here muſt be ſome miſtake. I moſt ſolemnly aſſure you I never had the leaſt intercourſe with your daughter, more than being, I believe, a week in the ſame houſe with her: as I live I never harboured ſuch a thought as you accuſe me of; I am ſure the young lady will acquit me, do let her be called, if ſhe is at home. To be ſure, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, ſhe does deny it; but I have been told you have wrote a great many letters to her, and that every thing was ſettled. I wrote to your daughter? returned Lord Calorne: I inſiſt on knowing who invented ſo infamous a falſity.—

Oh!

Oh! that you ſhall, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey: you ſhall ſee the perſon this moment.

At theſe words, Mrs. Aiſtrey turned to Conſtance, who could ſcarcely keep alive, and ſaid,—Now, my dear, call up your courage; I am ſorry you are put on ſuch diſagreeable buſineſs, but when he hears you he will certainly confeſs it, and I will go in with you. She had juſt ſpoken when her huſband threw open the door between the rooms, and called Miſs Fitzarthur. Mrs. Aiſtrey took her hand, and led her in: Lord Calorne advanced, and as ſoon as he ſaw who it was, lifting up his hands and eyes, exclaimed—Good God! is this my accuſer?—Yes, my lord, replied Mr. Aiſtrey, this lady pretends my daughter told her of a ſcheme between you to go off to-night, and to be ſure my daughter denies it, ſo I don't know. She *muſt* deny it interrupted Lord Calorne, for I am totally ignorant of any ſuch deſign. I am infinitely more hurt, madam, ſaid he to Conſtance, by meeting *you* on ſuch an occaſion, than by the calumny itſelf: that can do me little harm, no one who is at all acquainted with my character would ſuſpect me of ſuch an intention: but—He was, or ſeemed to be unable to ſay more; he turned haſtily from her, and abruptly quitted the room, making no reply to Mr. Aiſtrey's apologies, who, when he was gone, coming to Conſtance, began to upbraid her bitterly; but ſhe was out of the reach of his reproaches; extreme agitation overcame her, ſhe dropt into a chair, and fainted.

Mrs. Aiſtrey, who had for ſome time remained as motionleſs as a petrifaction, rang the bell, and aſſiſted by the ſervants, recovered her, while Mr. Aiſtrey went to ſeek his daughter, and adminiſtered to her the conſolation, which her ſuppoſed ſtate of perſecution demanded. When Conſtance came to herſelf he was returned, and ſhe heard him deſire his wife to go down to the parlour, with which ſhe very reluctantly, and in tears, complied: he walked ſilently backwards and forwards in the room, and preſently ſtopping, called a ſervant and bid him deſire Miſs Aiſtrey to come down; the anſwer ſhe ſent back was that ſhe did not chuſe to come where Miſs Fitzarthur was, and that if her father wanted her ſhe would meet him in the parlour. There, ſaid Mr. Aiſtrey, to Conſtance, you ſee what your fine ſtory has done: you have made my poor dear girl quite miſerable, I don't wonder ſhe won't come down.

I do not, anſwered Conſtance with all the firmneſs ſhe could aſſume, in the leaſt repent what I have done, though it is I who am puniſhed for it. I have done my duty, and am ſatisfied with the conſciouſneſs that I deſerve no greater blame, at the worſt, than that of having been impoſed on. Mr. Aiſtrey ſaid nothing, and ſhe, having in ſome meaſure recovered her powers of recollection, ſaw that his houſe was no longer a habitation for her: ſhe therefore told him, that as it would be intolerably painful to her to remain with thoſe whom ſhe at preſent appeared ſo to have injured, ſhe begged him to accept her

her thanks for the many civilities ſhe had received from him and his family, and not to charge her with ingratitude if ſhe left his houſe immediately, as ſhe wiſhed to ſpare Miſs Aiſtrey the pain of ſeeing her, and ſhould remove to a diſtance from her with all poſſible expedition. To this ſhe had no reply: ſhe roſe from her ſeat, though ſhe could ſcarcely ſtand, and deſiring that a hackney coach might be called, haſtened up ſtairs to put together what ſhe meant to take with her.

This buſineſs ſhe ſoon diſpatched, and then ſat down to conſider whither ſhe ſhould retreat till ſhe could inform Lady Barbara of her ſituation: ſhe remembered a Mrs. Langrivier, a milliner in Bond-ſtreet, whom, while ſhe was at Mrs. Stavenell's, ſhe had employed, and knowing that ſhe let part of her houſe and was a woman of character, ſhe thought ſhe might without impropriety go there. The coach came, and not being able to juſtify to herſelf leaving the houſe without again ſeeing it's maſter and miſtreſs, ſhe went to the drawing-room, but found nobody; as ſhe did not chuſe to riſque meeting Miſs Aiſtrey, ſhe ſent to know if ſhe might take her leave of the family, a requeſt which Mr. Aiſtrey anſwered by coming up ſtairs. With incredible inſenſibility he aſked her what was her pleaſure,—and ſhe, unable any longer to reſtrain her tears, begged that ſhe might ſee Mrs. Aiſtrey. You muſtn't, madam, he replied with ſternneſs: ſhe's ſorry to part with you, it will be over when

you're gone, and ſo I deſire you won't ſtay. Theſe words inſpired the reſolution Conſtance wanted; ſhe ſaid no more, left the room, and in a ſtate of mind which a moment's reflection would have rendered diſtraction, threw herſelf into the coach. Wholly occupied by the paſt, ſhe was incapable of looking forward to what was next to be done, and when ſhe ſtopt at Mrs. Langrivier's, ſhe could ſcarcely recollect herſelf ſufficiently to know what ſhe was to inquire for.

It happened that Mrs. Langrivier had at that time no lodgers in the houſe, which, joined to her former acquaintance with Miſs Fitzarthur, procured her a welcome reception: her baggage was brought in, and ſhe was ſoon ſettled in her novel habitation: ſhe now found it neceſſary to exert all her faculties, and conſidering that, whatever were her feelings, it would be weakneſs to ſuffer them to incapacitate her from taking ſome care for herſelf, ſhe ſtrove to baniſh reflection, and turned her thoughts towards the method ſhe meant to purſue.

As ſoon as her things were diſpoſed of, ſhe ſent for her landlady, and told her, ſhe believed ſhe ſhould ſtay with her only a few days, as ſhe purpoſed going into the country; that therefore ſhe ſhould not hire a ſervant, if it could be made convenient for her to eat with the family, and if the maid of the houſe might do what little ſhe wanted. This was agreed too, and Conſtance ſat down to write to her mother; but ſhe found herſelf unequal to the taſk,

and

and feared that, if ſhe wrote as her perturbed imagination dictated, ſhe ſhould alarm Lady Barbara, and the poſt being already gone, ſhe choſe to defer it till the morrow, dreading the admiſſion of her own thoughts, ſhe took up a book which lay on the window: to read was impoſſible, a call to ſupper relieved her, and ſhe obeyed it, though ſhe had no inclination to eat, becauſe otherwiſe ſhe muſt have remained alone.

She found company ſtill more painful than ſolitude, and therefore ſoon retired to bed: here ſhe could not exclude the remembrance of the events of the day: ſhe paſſed a ſleepleſs night in amazement at the depravity of Miſs Aiſtrey's mind, and in endeavours to diſcover, by the circumſtances of this tranſaction, whether Lord Calorne's ignorance was real or feigned. Her ſufferings were not diminiſhed by the neceſſity ſhe was under of believing Miſs Aiſtrey's firſt unguarded declaration: ſhe could not imagine, even if it had been for her advantage, that ſhe had abilities to fabricate ſuch a ſtory, and what Lord Calorne's motive was for diſclaiming all concern in it, when Mr. Aiſtrey had declared himſelf ſo well ſatisfied, ſhe could not conceive, unleſs his intention was not of the ſort Miſs Aiſtrey ſuppoſed it.

CHAP. XXIII.

ASSISTANCE.

PART of the next morning ſhe devoted to giving Lady Barbara an account of what had happened; but in the evening ſhe received a letter from her, ſent with her trunk from Mr. Aiſtrey's, which informed her that an indiſpoſition, and the hope of benefit from the ſea air, had obliged her to leave Lord Drumferne's; ſhe imagined her ſtay on the coaſt would not be longer than a fortnight, and deſcribed her ſituation as being very inconvenient; the concluſion of her letter was much more pleaſing than the beginning, ſome circumſtances had occurred which expedited her removal to the houſe ſhe had taken, and ſhe expreſs'd her hopes, that in leſs than three weeks ſhe ſhould be ſettled, and have her daughter with her. This determined Conſtance to poſtpone letting her know ſhe had left Mr. Aiſtrey's, till they were nearer meeting, as ſuch unwelcome news might retard her recovery, and ſhe could herſelf remain very ſafely at Mrs. Langrivier's. Sh

therefore wrote a penny poſt letter to Mrs. Aiſtrey, telling her how ſhe was ſituated, and begged that Lady Barbara might not, through her, be made acquainted with her having left her houſe, conſidered herſelf as ſettled where ſhe was for ſome time, and pleaſed herſelf with the proſpect of ſoon ſeeing her mother.

She had juſt written her letter, when the maid came up with a meſſage from a gentleman who deſired to ſpeak with Miſs Fitzarthur: as he did not ſend his name ſhe feared it was Lord Farnford, and returned for anſwer that ſhe was not well enough to ſee any body. The ſervant ſoon came back with a note by which Conſtance learnt that this gentleman was Captain Berneil, and that he wanted to ſee her on important buſineſs; ſhe then, though not very willingly, deſired he might be ſhewn up. He came in, and after many apologies for his intruſion, told her it was a hope that he could ſerve her which made him ſo urgent; that he could not bear to ſee ſuch injuſtice as had driven her from Mr. Aiſtrey's without doing all in his power to relieve the innocent, and that, as he was the author of the deceit which had impoſed on her, he was bound, as a man and a gentleman, to clear up the matter. Conſtance flattering herſelf that ſhe ſhould at leaſt learn the truth, thanked him for his candour, and begged him to explain himſelf.

'I dare venture, ſaid he, to ſuppoſe a few hours acquaintance with Miſs Aiſtrey convinced you that

her character was so entirly composed of folly, and vanity as to leave her little more than her person and fortune to recommend her: the first of these attracted my attention, and learning that she was heiress to considerable wealth, I commenced an intimacy with her: her foibles encouraged me, and as in my situation such an addition as her fortune would be extremely acceptable, I declared myself a candidate for her favour. Some time ago, she was on a visit to a relation, and after it I never saw her without hearing so much of Lord Calorne, whom she had met there, that I feared he was my rival: on inquiry this apprehension was allayed, I found common civility had been exaggerated into particular regard, and that it was in Miss Aistrey's vanity alone that any suspicion of his attachment to her existed. It occurred to me that I might avail myself of this absurd opinion, and I accordingly wrote to her in Lord Calorne's name, bribing her maid to my interest; my letter was presently answered, in terms the most encouraging, and thus we have carried on a correspondence, in which I ventured to propose a jaunt to Gretna-Green: to this Miss Aistrey consented, and last night was the time fixed for our setting off. I trusted to my powers of persuasion, and the danger of her returning, that she would be easily reconciled to the deceit, and as her expectations must cease when she discovered that Lord Calorne had no passion for her, I did not doubt her accepting me. Your very laudable and spirited conduct,

madam,

madam, defeated my purpoſe, and I come now to offer every attonement in my power and to vindicate you to Mr. and Mrs. Aiſtrey.'

Conſtance expreſt her gratitude for Captain Berneil's very honourable conduct, and willingly accepted his offer: he propoſed going with her the next morning to Bedford-Row; but to this ſhe did not readily conſent, being unwilling to viſit a houſe, from which ſhe had been ſo driven, while the ſuſpicions of her exiſted. As he ſeemed to wiſh to ſerve her in the way moſt agreeable to her, ſhe aſked him to write to Mr. Aiſtrey, which he, with the utmoſt alacrity, promiſed to do, and told her that, in order that ſhe might judge whether his letter would anſwer the purpoſe, he would, with her permiſſion, call in the morning and ſhew it her, before he ſent it: he then politely took his leave, and Conſtance could not but remark how much the behaviour of the gentlemen depends on that of the ladies; to Miſs Aiſtrey Captain Berneil was familiar, confident, and negligent; to her he was diſtant, modeſt, and attentive: ſhe was pleaſed to obſerve the difference, as it ſeemed an approbation of her deportment, and her ſpirits were raiſed by the hope of being ſoon reſtored to Mrs. Aiſtrey's good opinion, and by the reflection that ſhe had not needleſsly alarmed Lady Barbara.

The next morning after breakfaſt, Captain Berneil called, and produced his letter, inſiſting on her impartial examination of it: there was nothing ob-

jectionable in it, and ſhe returned it with many thanks for the trouble he had taken. And now, madam, ſaid he, ſince you ſeem to have a high ſenſe of this favour, as you term it, will you pleaſe to adjudge the reward it deſerves? what recompenſe ſhall I have? I am afraid, ſhe replied, it is out of my power to promiſe you any other than the approbation of your conſcience: thanks are but a poor return, and yet I have nothing elſe to offer you: cou'd I impart my gratitude to Mr. Aiſtrey, he would reward you. I ſhall look only to you, Captain Berneil anſwered, for a gratuity. I think myſelf ſingularly happy in an opportunity of ſhewing my reſpect for you, and I will ingenuouſly tell you I am not diſintereſted: it is a paſſion for you, as old as my acquaintance with you, that has made me thus anxious to oblige you: in ſhort, my dear madam, to be explicit, you muſt believe how ſincerely I love you, and you muſt promiſe to return my love before I ſtir a ſtep farther for your vindication.

Surprize prevented Conſtance from interrupting him, and ſhe turned from him towards the window; he followed her, and deſired to know, if there was any thing unreaſonable in his requeſt—ſhe in vain endeavoured to reply; he ſeized one of her hands, and by that means brought her to a recollection of herſelf; he would have drawn her from the window, but this, from the number of people paſſing, being a place of ſecurity, ſhe reſiſted, ſtruggled to diſ-

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engage herſelf, and inſiſted on his leaving her: he ſtill, with a very ſmall exertion, held her faſt, and whenever ſhe ſpoke interrupted her: the caſe was now deſperate, he had both her hands, and ſwore ſhe ſhould not go; when ſuddenly pauſing, and looking into the ſtreet, he ſaid:—there goes the original of all this miſtake. She turned her head, and ſaw Lord Calorne paſſing on horſeback; the captain and he bowed, and Conſtance, who was in full ſight, at the window, and would have given the univerſe to have quitted it, perceived him as if involuntarily, ſtop his horſe, and fix his eyes on her, with a look of the utmoſt contempt: recollecting the extreme impropriety of her ſituation, and the idea it muſt have excited, ſhe would have turned away, had not Captain Berneil prevented her; he held both her hands in one of his, and putting up the ſaſh would have ſpoken to Lord Calorne; but he rode off as if it was to avoid it.—Now, madam, to buſineſs, ſaid the captain; what do you think of my requeſt? think of it? anſwered Conſtance, I think with equal contempt of that, and him who made it; and I would rather remain all my life undeſervedly ſuſpected, than be beholden to you for my juſtification: releaſe me, Sir, this inſtant, or I will alarm the family. Surely, madam, he replied, you miſunderſtand me. I am very well acquainted with the embarraſſment of your circumſtances, and know it is ſuch as would make the acceptance of a handſome preſent adviſe-

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able.—It is in my power to offer you, if not affluence, ſuch a ſituation as it is inconſiſtent with your good ſenſe to reject. Inſtead of ungenerouſly ſecuring you to myſelf, I will leave you at liberty to better your fortune whenever you have an opportunity; and I will permanently ſecure to you at the death of my brother, who cannot live long, every gratification that a very ample income can beſtow.

Terrified and enraged at this inſult, and yet unable to detach herſelf from his hold, Conſtance was ready to ſink, till ſhe recollected that perhaps ſome one might be in the parlour underneath; ſhe therefore, without making any anſwer to ſo infamous a propoſal, knocked ſmartly with her heel on the floor, and waited impatiently to ſee the door open. When Captain Berneil found her ſo reſolute, he quitted her; and taking out the letter to Mr. Aiſtrey, he tore it in pieces and threw it into the fire, ſwearing that if ſhe was ſo obſtinate, ſhe ſhould have no aſſiſtance from him. Mrs. Langrivier herſelf obeyed her call, and the ſcoundrel captain prevented her deſiring he might be ſhewn out, by leaving the room. Conſtance then gave her to underſtand in general that her viſitor had been troubleſome, and ſtrictly charged her never to admit him again: as ſoon as ſhe was alone ſhe relieved her diſappointment and terror by a free indulgence of her tears, and reaſoning with herſelf that her ſituation was not worſe than before her expectations were raiſed, ſhe endeavoured to ſubmit patiently

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to thoſe evils which ſhe could neither foreſee nor avert.

CHAP. XXIV.

RESTITUTION.

IN the evening, as ſhe was ſitting by herſelf, the following note was brought to her.

'Lord Calorne preſents his compliments to Miſs Fitzarthur, and being deſirous of having in his poſſeſſion thoſe letters which ſhe has received from him, as they cannot be of any value to her, would be obliged to her if ſhe has not deſtroyed them, to ſend them by the bearer, who is inſtructed to reſtore her's.'

It was ſome ſeconds before ſhe could ſufficiently recover the amazement this billet threw her into, to know what it required her to do: ſhe could not underſtand what was meant by ſaying *her* letters ſhould be reſtored; as ſhe had never written a line to Lord Calorne; but being determined, notwithſtanding

ſtanding any miſtake, to comply with his wiſh, ſhe deſired the meſſenger might be ſhewn up, and knowing where to find the papers, ſhe fetched, encloſed, and ſealed them. Her want of firmneſs while ſhe was thus employed, ſhe was aware, the perſon ſent, and who had the appearance of a gentleman, diſcovered; his eyes were fixed on her, he repeatedly begged ſhe would not hurry herſelf, and at laſt ſaid that though he was ignorant of the purport of his commiſſion he wiſhed any one but himſelf had been employed in it. Conſtance, anxious to behave as if unconcerned, made an effort to ſpeak, but her faltering voice betrayed her ſtill more, ſhe gave him the packet in ſilence: he told her he was ordered to aſk if theſe were all: ſhe anſwered with aſſumed compoſure, that they were; when conſidering that Lord Calorne's deſire to have his letters, implied that all communication between them was to be forgotten, ſhe thought of ſending back his picture, and ſaid to the gentleman ſhe had omitted one thing ſhe meant to return, which ſhe muſt beg his patience, while ſhe ſought. The picture was in her pocket, and it was only for the purpoſe of collecting her fortitude that ſhe aſked this indulgence: ſhe went into the adjoining room, but feeling her courage rather give ground than improve, ſhe almoſt immediately returned, and taking out this laſt relic of a moſt unfortunate affection, ſhe offered it, without looking at it, to Lord Calorne's meſſenger: when he ſaw what ſhe was about to give him, he declined taking

ing it, and ſaid he was ordered to receive the letters *only*; he then exchanged a very ſmall packet for that ſhe had made up, and retired.

This trying ſcene concluded, ſhe proceeded to examine what ſhe had accepted, and was aſtoniſhed to find encloſed three letters directed to Lord Calorne, in a hand very different from her own: ſhe was going to return them to their cover, ſuppoſing he was miſtaken in thinking them her's, but curioſity prompted her, as the ſeals had been broken, to open them: ſhe did ſo; the firſt that preſented itſelf was this; and a very curſory view confirmed a ſuſpicion which the ſuperſcription had excited that it was written by Lady Emma Peryton.

Monday night.

'Surely, my dear lord, you have conſtrued my hint that it was proper to avoid giving offence to ſome perſons into a wiſh that all intercourſe between us ſhould be, if not entirely given up, at leaſt ſuſpended. If this is not *your* inclination, do not ſuppoſe it *mine*: I cannot bear the reſtraint: why are you ſo backward?—why muſt all the advances come from me? you force me to tell you how dear you are to me, and that I will ſacrifice every thing to my love for you. I would not have our ſecret divulged; can we not find opportunities of meeting without witneſſes? Yes, we may. I have much to ſay to you, and thought when I ſat down I could have ſaid all in this letter; but I cannot endure that theſe characters ſhould ſtare me in the face:—I want

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the encouragement of your fond perſuaſive eloquence.—If it is fair, I have engaged to walk with lady Emma to-morrow, and will contrive to be at the reſervoir in the Green Park ſoon after twelve. I can detach myſelf from her; and if you will meet me, your kindneſs ſhall give me confidence to tell you how wholly I am

your's

C. M. Fitzarthur.'

The ſecond was as follows:

Wedneſday.

'I attribute every diſappointment yeſterday to your companion: you were indeed very good to bring your apology, and I ſaw by your countenance your vexation was equal to mine. To-morrow will afford us another opportunity; I breakfaſt at Lord Farnford's, and, if the weather permits, will walk through Hyde Park. I ſhall ſet out from here rather before ten o'clock, and ſhall have only a ſervant with me. If you can make it convenient to be in the Walnut-tree walk about the time you ſuppoſe I may reach it, we may then repair the mortification of yeſterday.——Do not think it neceſſary to ſend if it does not ſuit you to be there, as that might excite inquiries; but believe that the moſt favourable conſtruction will be put on all your actions or omiſſions, by

Your faithful and devoted

C. M. Fitzarthur.'

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The laſt contained theſe words:

'O cruel, cruel lord Calorne! what could you mean by your behaviour yeſterday?——but why do I aſk?——I know too well what you mean:——you hate me, you deſpiſe me, and could willingly ſee me another's: this you *ſhall* ſee:——I will eraſe every thought of you:——my reſentment alone ſhall remain, and in the arms of a leſs deſpicable lover ſhall thoſe wounds be healed which you have given to

C. M. Fitzarthur.'

It was now Conſtance perceived that artifice had been uſed to effect a breach between her and lord Calorne; ſhe ſaw that the malice of her enemies had employed itſelf to ruin her in his opinion, and the firſt idea which ſtruck her was, that ſhe alſo might have been impoſed on: thoſe who could dictate ſentiments ſo oppoſite to hers, as the forged letters contained, might not ſcruple aſſerting and ſupporting a direct falſity: ſhe honoured him for the contempt he had ſhewn her, and was inclined to diſbelieve all aſperſions of the moral character of one who had been ſo juſtifiably diſguſted. If he was the libertine repreſented to her, why had he not taken advantage of her pretended confeſſion? and why had he ſo meritoriouſly preferred breaking with her? The aſſignations, ſhe ſoon, from the attendant circumſtances, remembered, though wholly innocent, to have kept, and ſhe was no longer at a loſs to account for his behaviour when he met her

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in the Green Park, and afterwards in Hyde Park, the danger of which he had warned her was now intelligible, and much of his myſterious converſation in their parting interview explained; yet ſo inconſiſtent was his conduct with what ſhe had heard of him, ſo ſtrongly was the charge againſt him ſubſtantiated, and ſo incontrovertible was the teſtimony of his hand-writing in the letter to Miſs Greyburne, that prudently or impartially to acquit him was impoſſible: all ſhe could conclude was that his actions were at variance with his profeſſions, and that his true character, though it might not be bad to the degree ſhe had once ſuppoſed, was, equally with the motive which directed him, inſcrutable.

An idea now again forced its way into her mind that his hand might have been imitated, and that every circumſtance reſpecting Miſs Greyburne was invented; his viſiting the lady who ſhe had ſeen receive him in Pall Mall, was probably innocent and accidental: a falſe conſtruction and unjuſt ſurmiſes might have been put on it, and neither what ſhe had heard or ſeen was evidence of any thing criminal: perhaps her ſuppoſed conduct had driven him to accept the match with Miſs Ecklow; ſurely he was not to be blamed for ſeeking happineſs elſewhere when he could not expect it from her, and it was poſſible that he was no more guilty than herſelf. Overpowered by the reflections that ſhe had precipitately condemned him, that ſhe had made him unhappy, and that it was too late to rectify the

the error of her judgment, ſhe had only time to ring the bell, before ſhe dropt lifeleſs on the floor.

She found on her return to her ſenſes, Mrs. Langrivier and two of her work-women buſied about her: as ſhe could not readily account for this ſudden indiſpoſition, ſhe ſuffered them to ſuppoſe her ſubject to fits and diſmiſſed them, promiſing to ring if ſhe grew worſe. This ſhe ſoon found expedient, ſhe was ſo weak and low that ſhe could ſcarcely ſupport herſelf, and with Mrs. Langrivier's aſſiſtance ſhe went to bed.

CHAP. XXV.

SICKNESS.

DURING the night ſhe had not a moment's intermiſſion from diſtracting thoughts. Captain Berneil's diſhonourable conduct was almoſt obſcured in a multitude of other afflictions, and every idea that roſe increaſed her diſtreſs; Lord Calorne watching

watching her and ſmiling contemptuouſly at her, as ſhe had in the morning ſeen him, was perpetually before her eyes, and ſhe could hardly retain her ſenſes when ſhe thought of the ſuſpicions he muſt entertain of her from ſeeing her ſo ſituated: ſhe concluded, that no one was ever ſo unfortunate in having indifferent actions ſubjected to cenſure, that her character with him was ruined, and that however ſhe was calumniated, it was impoſſible to defend herſelf.

The morning returned before ſhe had cloſed her eyes, and with an aching head and heart ſhe roſe; ſhe could conceal her diſtreſs no longer from her mother; and after many efforts and frequent interruptions from her exceſſive agitation ſhe finiſhed a letter informing her of her ſituation, and begging that at all events ſhe would receive her: this ſhe ſent away, and after the exertion, finding herſelf unable to keep up, returned to her bed. In the evening ſhe was ſo ill that Mrs. Langrivier earneſtly deſired ſhe would ſend for ſome medical perſon: an apothecary in the ſame ſtreet was called in, who pronounced her in a high fever: the next morning ſhe was conſiderably worſe, and he adviſed having a phyſician: her fever now increaſed every hour, and rendered her delirious; ſhe was thought in danger, another phyſician was ſent for, and after a conſultation they were of opinion that unleſs ſhe was immediately relieved, ſhe could not live twenty-four hours.

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In that time, however, ſhe changed for the better, and gave thoſe about her hopes: Mrs. Langrivier's attention to her was inceſſant, her anxiety was very great, and ſhe wiſhed to inform Mrs. Stavenell of her illneſs, but Conſtance had before hinted to her, as a reaſon for her not going thither, that there was now no connexion between them, this deterred her from applying to her, and yet to avoid it was difficult. The expences neceſſarily incurred had, in the firſt three days, exhauſted the money in her purſe, the opportunity of a lucid interval was ſeized to inquire where they ſhould find more, and ſhe directed them to look in her pocket-book in which there was a ten pound note: this, as ſhe had two phyſicians was ſoon gone, and Mrs. Langrivier was in the ſame diſtreſs without the ſame means of extricating herſelf. Miſs Fitzarthur's diſorder affected her head principally, ſhe grew again worſe, had now no lucid intervals, and Mrs. Langrivier ſought for what things of value were in her poſſeſſion: the firſt ſhe met with was Lord Calorne's picture, which promiſed to afford the neceſſary ſupply, as it had been, in the liberality of the donor's affection, made as coſtly as poſſible: it was ſet with brilliants, and on the reverſe which contained his lordſhip's hair platted, was his coronet in very valuable jewels, and his initial under it; but that which rendered it of ſtill greater worth to the poſſeſſor was its very ſtrong reſemblance. Mrs. Langrivier ſhowed it to a jeweller in the neighbourhood

hood, and told him the circumſtances of the caſe, he offered her the full equivalent for it, ſhe did not think herſelf warranted in parting with it, and therefore deſired to have only 10l. as that would be ſufficient to defray the current expences; ſhe ſaid if ſhe wanted more ſhe would come for it, and giving the man a ſtrict charge to keep it, left it.

A fortnight Miſs Fitzarthur continued in a very doubtful ſtate: then her fever abated, and though reduced ſo low as to make thoſe who attended her fear ſhe would go off every minute, ſhe was pronounced, unleſs ſhe relapſed, out of danger; in a few days ſhe mended very faſt, and in another week recovered all but her ſtrength.

Soon after ſhe was taken ill, a letter had been ſent to her from Mr. Aiſtrey's, which had not yet been ſhewn her, ſhe was now thought well enough to ſee it, was told of it, and begging to have it, was ſupported while ſhe broke the ſeal, but almoſt as ſoon as ſhe had looked at it ſhe dropt it out of her hand, and became to appearance a corpſe. Mrs. Langrivier was alarmed, the apothecary was ſent for, he knew it was no natural cauſe that had occaſioned her fainting, and after ſome time having recovered her, he deſired to ſee the letter: it contained that ſhe had written to her mother, unopened, and news that even in full health muſt have had this effect on her, for Lord Drumferne informed her by it that Lady Barbara, who had for ſome weeks been ill, though not ſo as

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to excite their apprehenſions, died the day before he wrote.

Her fever now returned as violently as before, and with leſs probability of her recovery. Mrs. Langrivier borrowed more money on the picture, and all hopes of Conſtance's life were at an end; yet her youth ſtruggled through this relapſe, and ſhe was in ten days again out of danger. Her ſpirits were then more affected than before, and ſhe was almoſt broken-hearted; ſhe remembered having ſeen the letter, and was ſenſible how much ſhe had erred in imagining, previous to this event, that her afflictions were beyond aggravation, all other conſiderations appearing trifling when compared with this calamity.

As her ſtrength returned, her fortitude increaſed, and ſuffering her reaſon to exert itſelf, aided by her natural diſpoſition to acquieſce in the will of heaven, ſhe ſaw that in her ſituation the enjoyment of grief was a luxury ſhe muſt not indulge in. The firſt day ſhe could guide a pen ſhe wrote to Lord Drumferne, begging that whatever papers her mother had left might be either ſent to her, or depoſited in a place of ſecurity: many efforts were neceſſary to committing this brief requeſt to writing, and the recollection of her loſs, the defeat of all her hopes of retiring with her deareſt friend, and the diſmal proſpect before her ſo overcame her, that ſhe was obliged to dictate part of her letter to one of Mrs. Langrivier's young women.

In the midſt of her afflictions ſhe was not totally deprived of reſolution. Mrs. Aiſtrey forwarded to her a letter from Lord Reycolm, and this teſtimony of regard gave her pleaſure: ſhe looked, though with little expectation of being gratified, for a line on the inſide of the cover: but Mrs. Aiſtrey had uniformly incloſed what ſhe had to ſend her in a blank, and had never either anſwered her requeſt, that Lady Barbara might not know what had happened, nor tranſmitted one word of comfort; whatever came to her for Miſs Fitzarthur ſhe punctually conveyed to her, but this was all the notice ſhe took of her, and Conſtance ſuppoſed reaſonably that Mr. Aiſtrey would not permit any intercourſe between them. Lord Reycolm's letter communicated the following intelligence.

'My dear Madam,

'How ſhall I expreſs my thanks for your advice? How my happineſs in having followed it? The conſolation you afforded me, when I ſo ſtood in need of it, was greater than any I ever experienced, or ever expected to receive; and I ſeize the firſt vacant hour to pay you the inſignificant tribute of my gratitude, by informing you of my ſucceſs. I could not but approve the counſel you gave me, and without loſs of time adopted it, as I thought the place where we then were, favourable to my purpoſe; I told Lady Reycolm, that on mature deliberation I condemned myſelf for reſting ſatisfied with having written to Bourdeaux, and that I ſhould

ſhould ſeriouſly think of going thither—She enjoins my revealing to you whatever errors ſhe was at that time guilty of, and therefore, I muſt tell you that ſhe anſwered me, by ſaying, if I choſe to go, it muſt be without her, and ſhe would meet me ſomewhere elſe. Encouraged by you I was poſitive, and inſiſted on her accompanying me; ſhe appealed to her relations, they blamed me, but I was not deterred, and actually wrote to Bourdeaux to fix the time of our being there. I believe all Lorraine thinks me a greater ſavage than ever yet exiſted; I heard of nothing but my cruelty, I was threatened, I was entreated, and I was obſtinate. We ſet out together; I had ſo much barbarity as to forbid her having any other companion, and never had two pilgrims a more unpleaſant journey; however we got ſafe to our place of deſtination. I found the gentleman we were to viſit unlike, it is true, all my other new relations, becauſe he was a rational creature, and I ſoon perceived he was exactly what you ſuppoſed him: he has a large family well brought up, though not in the expenſive way my wife has been, and his domeſtic œconomy is admirable.

This was the place, and theſe were the people exactly ſuited to my wiſhes; I told him my uneaſineſs while with Lady Reycolm's more intimate connexions, and engaged him to aid me in my deſign, which he approved and encouraged. The firſt week was uncomfortable beyond what you can con-

ceive; my wife fretted herſelf really ill; and I knew not whether to retract or proceed; but mentioning to her couſin my doubt of the propriety of continuing ſeverity, he adviſed perſeverance, and aſked me to leave the management of this affair to him, to this I readily conſented, for I was heartily tired of the office of jailor: he propoſed my abſenting myſelf from the houſe, and my writing to Lady Reycolm to tell her ſhe had by her injudicious conduct driven me from her, that it was my intention to leave her for ſome time where ſhe was, and to ſeek happineſs without her. I complied, knowing ſhe was perfecty ſafe, and paſſed two days without ſeeing her, though I was in the neighbourhood of the place. Notwithſtanding all I ſuffered from the neceſſity of behaving ſo ill to her, I was firm, and did not permit my love for her to blind my reaſon a *ſecond* time: I had accepted the mediation of our common friend, and I gave myſelf up to be ruled by him. On the third day after I had quitted her, I received a meſſage from the houſe, deſiring that I would return immediately, a ſummons which you will believe I inſtantly obeyed: I went back, and getting firſt to the ſpeech of her couſin, learnt from him the change he had wrought in her: he ſaid my leaving her had immediately rendered her tractable, but that he feared, a relapſe if he ſent for me ſooner; that ſhe was very much indiſpoſed, and had that morning in the moſt ſuppliant terms begged him,

if

if I was within reach, to desire me to return, as she was sure she should die if she did not see me.

'I was fearful of surprizing her, and though I longed ardently to meet her, waited till she was told of my arrival: I went alone to her, she flew into my arms, and dropping on her knees, in terms too pathetic for me to think on without agony, implored my forgiveness: such a reception would have disarmed the maddest fury, what effect do you then imagine it had on that, in which I trust no man ever exceeded me, conjugal affection.

'Since that hour her whole conduct has been in the highest degree laudable, she has gained a victory over that most powerful enemy, self; and I have no uneasiness, excepting what arises from the melancholy her repentance occasions her; this is wearing off, she strives to be chearful, and I am sure her errors are amply compensated by the example she now holds out to her sex. She dreads nothing so much as returning to a life of dissipation, professes herself perfectly satisfied to remain for some time where she is, and has made me inexpressibly happy by anticipating a wish, which I hardly dared, considering national prejudices, to suggest, that our little one should be a native subject of Great Britain: we therefore propose being in London early in the summer, and shall hope you will favor us with a long visit.

I had an injunction from her when I began this letter to omit all expressions of her regard, and, in-

ſtead, to leave a ſpace that ſhe might herſelf add ſomething: I muſt not encroach on her ladyſhip's part of the paper though I could employ a great portion of it in repeating my obligations to you, and my aſſurances that I am, with unfeigned regard,

Your moſt affectionate friend
and grateful humble ſervant,
REYCOLM.'

The ſpace left Lady Reycolm was thus filled:

'If I was as much aſhamed of my faults as I ought to be, I ſhould ſtill be ſilent; but when I think there is one to whom I am infinitely more guilty than to my dear Miſs Fitzarthur, and that he has generouſly pardoned my errors, I am encouraged to hope I ſhall meet with the ſame charity from her. I have been very negligent: I wiſh that was the worſt I have been: I am grieved for what is paſt, and will, as far as I can, atone for it. My lord ſtands behind my chair, and reads what I write; he ſays he will take my pen away if I entertain you no better, and that he will anſwer for your forgiving me. Do, tell me you forgive me, and I will be ſatisfied. I owe every thing to you, and hope ſoon to thank you in perſon for your goodneſs: I have ſeen your laſt letter, and think myſelf extremely obliged to you for the advice you gave my huſband: he has written ſo wide, that he has left no more room than is ſufficient to aſſure you of my beſt wiſhes, and to promiſe you ſhall ſoon hear

hear from me. I cannot tell when we ſhall be in England exactly; but whenever it is, I ſhall expect you to make a part of the family of

Your obliged and ſincerely affectionate
ADELAIDE REYCOLM.'

CHAP. XXVI.

BOUNTY.

THE happineſs of our friends is an eſſential ingredient to our own, and to a generous mind it imparts a large ſhare of enjoyments. Conſtance felt now the bleſſing of a ſympathetic heart; ſhe had frequently, when herſelf in poſſeſſion of all that the world calls valuable, ſhed

'The graceful tear that ſtreams for others' woe;'

and at the moment when ſhe ſeemed deprived of every comfort, this diſpoſition pointed out ſubject for rejoicing, her pleaſure was increaſed by her having in ſome degree, earned it; it was her advice that had reſtored Lord Reycolm's peace of mind,

ſhe exulted laudably in the ſucceſs of her endeavours, as it reſpected thoſe dear to her, and ſhe promiſed herſelf no ſmall gratification from it on their return to England: that event ſhe was well aſſured bounded all anxiety for her ſituation: Lord Reycolm, it could not be doubted would exert himſelf for her, and aſſiſt her with his advice and protection; and ſhe hoped her greateſt difficulties were over. Without loſs of time ſhe wrote to him and Lady Reycolm, telling them ſome of the unfortunate occurrences that had diſtreſſed her; but carefully ſuppreſſing the mention either of Lord Farnford or Lord Calorne, and repreſenting all in the beſt colours, leſt concern for her ſhould embitter their felicity; and buoyed up by the conſideration, that, could ſhe ſtruggle through a few months longer, ſhe need not deſpair of external comfort, ſhe ſucceſsfully concealed from them, and would ſcarcely allow herſelf to believe, that ſhe was, in her preſent ſtate, moſt eminently wretched.

Hope could ſuſtain this deluſion for a very ſhort time; ſhe wrote in good ſpirits, but they laſted only while ſhe wrote: every object ſhe caſt her eyes on tended to awaken her from ſo pleaſing a delirium; ſolitude, grief, a diſtracted mind, a retroſpect to better days, a dread that every ſucceeding hour might furniſh new calamity, and a privation of almoſt all bleſſings, except thoſe which prolonged her miſery, were the objects of her contemplations, and obtruded themſelves on her thoughts at every interval,

terval, leaving behind them the conviction that, however alleviated the more recent cauſes of her diſtreſs might be, that which firſt gave the wound to her happineſs muſt for ever remain, and ſhe for ever be miſerable.

Lord Drumferne ſoon anſwered the letter ſhe had written to him, with many expreſſions of ſorrow for her illneſs, an aſſurance that whatever Lady Barbara had left ſhould be taken care of, and a cold invitation to Miſs Fitzarthur, if ſhe came into the country, to ſpend a few days at his houſe, but ſo much was this, by his lordſhip himſelf, conſidered as a matter of form, that he deſired to know whether he ſhould remit the half-yearly payments of the annuity ſhe was to have, and the money found after Lady Barbara's deceaſe in her poſſeſſion; ſhe deſired by the return of poſt to have the latter ſent to her; but as no plan for her future life was ſettled, and ſhe could not tell where ſhe ſhould be, ſhe begged him to receive her annuity, to keep it in his hands, and to ſuffer her to draw for it. This requeſt was complied with, and all her pecuniary affairs ſettled.

It had been matter of wonder to Conſtance how Mrs. Langrivier had defrayed the expences of her illneſs; ſhe had ſeen her pay the phyſician's fees repeatedly; when her fever left her, and it was neceſſary that ſhe ſhould eat to regain her ſtrength, all the whims incident to convaleſcence were complied with, and all the niceties that could tempt appetite

procured, as ſhe herſelf was conſcious, at a great expence: the unſatisfactory anſwers ſhe received, whenever ſhe expreſt her fears that ſhe was much her landlady's debtor, confirmed the only probable ſuppoſition that ſhe advanced whatever was laid out; and ſhe longed for the arrival of Lord Drumferne's remittance that ſhe might diſcharge her obligations. She was now nearly well; ſhe could ſit up great part of the day, and all reaſon for concealing the means by which money had been raiſed was at an end: when ſhe next mentioned her apprehenſions, the ſecret was developed, and though ſhe was vexed at being ſeparated from ſo dear a part of her property, ſhe forbore ſaying ſo, and approved Mrs. Langrivier's caution, as the picture was redeemable as ſoon as the money arrived.

A few days brought her a return from her uncle, incloſing notes to the amount of 70l. and ſhe immediately ſent Mrs. Langrivier to fetch the picture; but after a ſhort ſtay, her meſſenger came back with the money, and the melancholy information that the jeweller had been forced to part with it. The apology for this diſobedience of his injunctions was, that a gentleman had the day before come to the ſhop, whoſe face reſembling very much the miniature with which he had been intruſted, he had ſhewn it him; that immediately on ſeeing it, he had claimed it as his picture, and inſiſted on having it: that as the value of it had not been paid he refuſed him, till he returned and produced a bill

which

which he had paid for ſetting it: that he then could not doubt his being the owner, and, as he ſhould not have been juſtified in detaining it, he had ſuffered him to take it, on his reimburſing him what he had advanced on it; but that the gentleman whoſe name he would not reveal, had left a bank note to be given to any perſon who ſhould come for more money on the picture.

This was a very ſevere mortification to Conſtance; ſhe was convinced it was Lord Calorne who had gotten the picture, and was extremely hurt by thinking he would attribute her parting from it to a total want of regard for him, and a deſire to avail herſelf, in the baſeſt way, of his liberality; the generous concern he had manifeſted for her by leaving the means of ſupplying her wants, made her earneſtly deſirous to explain the circumſtance; but to do this with propriety would, in any ſituation, have been difficult, in her's it would have born a very humiliating conſtruction: yet ſhe could not think of accepting his bounty, and therefore ſent Mrs. Langrivier back with his note, which was for 100l. another for 30l. which was the amount of the ſums borrowed, and a requeſt to the jeweller that they might be returned, with the acknowledgements of the perſon to whom the favour was intended.

Fretting at this untoward accident occaſioned a ſlight relapſe; but as ſhe had recovered a conſiderable degree of ſtrength, it was ſoon conquered, and ſhe endeavoured to direct the whole of her attention

to the interval preceding Lord Reycolm's return: as ſhe was fearful of truſting her own judgement, and aware that with her ſmall knowledge of the world ſhe ſhould be unable to combat the difficulties ſhe might meet with in it, ſhe extended her views no farther than till ſhe could have his advice, and reſolved to adhere to no opinion of her own, excepting that of its being improper that his houſe ſhould be her home: his friendſhip for her ſhe ſuppoſed might lead him, when he was an eye-witneſs of her uncomfortable ſituation, to urge what his wife had hinted; but ſhe determined, notwithſtanding it would probably be extremely pleaſant to live with them, that ſhe would not be prevailed on to accept it: from an intimacy leſs cloſe as this ſhe hoped to derive not much gratification, and ſhe knew ſhe ſhould eſcape great inconveniences and the hazard of cenſure.

How to diſpoſe of this period, which ſhe imagined could not exceed three or four months, required deliberation: Her uncle had ſent her an invitation to his houſe, but it was not ſufficient to tempt her, nor would ſhe on any account after the reaſon her mother had aſſigned for his coolneſs, have become his gueſt. At Marſtonbury, though ſhe had ſome few acquaintances to whom ſhe had always been welcome, ſhe could not now expect to find friendſhip that would in any degree atone for the pain of returning to a place whence ſhe had been ſo exiled. To remain where ſhe was, beſides being too coſtly,

was

was very uncomfortable; ſhe could not think of ſettling there without a ſervant, and this would conſiderably increaſe an expence already greater than ſhe could prudently incur: another reaſon there was againſt her living alone, which weighed much with her, and this was the uncertainty of her ſafety: her fears reſpecting lord Farnford had ſubſided, and from his having entirely neglected her, ſhe hoped he was diſcouraged, but ſhe was not ſufficiently ſure of this to relax any of her caution, nor could ſhe, how free ſoever from vanity, be ignorant, that what expoſed her to obſervation, endangered her. She therefore turned her thoughts towards that ſituation which would beſt protect her, and could find none ſo eligible as that of boarding with ſome genteel family, who would receive her as a relation; it was totally indifferent to her in what part of the kingdom ſhe fixed, and the requiſites ſhe looked for, as her ſtay would be ſhort, being only regularity and integrity, ſhe flattered herſelf it would be eaſy to meet with ſuch a reſidence as would ſuit her.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

POLITENESS.

AT a leiſure opportunity ſhe told Mrs. Langrivier her intention, and as ſhe was a woman who did not want common ſenſe or prudence, aſked her to inquire among her acquaintance for ſuch a ſituation: while ſhe was ſpeaking to her, a cuſtomer called her away, and in about a quarter of an hour ſhe returned telling Miſs Fitzarthur that the lady to whom ſhe had been ſent for had aſked very kindly after her during her illneſs, and was extremely glad to hear ſhe had recovered: ſhe added, that the lady wiſhed much to ſee her, and had tried to perſuade her to introduce her; that not knowing whether it would be agreeable, ſhe had excuſed herſelf, by ſaying, Miſs Fitzarthur was not well enough to receive company, but that ſhe had promiſed to mention it to her, and againſt ſhe came again to tell her whether ſhe would accept a viſit from her. And pray, ſaid Conſtance, who is the lady? Lady George Brenville, Mrs. Langrivier anſwered a very

a very good cuſtomer of mine: ſhe comes here generally two or three times a week, and ſhe was ſo grieved to hear of your illneſs that ſhe either came or ſent every day while your fever was ſo bad, to inquire after you. To refuſe ſuch a requeſt, when its motive was a benevolent concern for her, was not juſtifiable, and Conſtance, though rather averſe to admitting ſtrangers, deſired that when her ladyſhip came again ſhe might thank her in perſon for her civilities.

The next day, about two o'clock, lady George called and ſent up a meſſenger to know whether ſhe might wait on Miſs Fitzarthur. Conſtance returned an excuſe for not going down to her, on account of her yet weak ſtate, but ſaid ſhe ſhould be happy to ſee her ladyſhip, if ſhe would take the trouble of coming up; an invitation which was immediately accepted: on entering, ſhe deſired Miſs Fitzarthur not to riſe, and ſeated herſelf oppoſite to her, inquiring with much earneſtneſs after her health, congratulating her on her recovery, expreſſing the anxiety ſhe had felt while ſhe heard ſhe was in danger, and very politely apologizing for the unwarrantable liberty ſhe had taken. Concern ſo warmly profeſſed was received with ſenſibility, and returned with gratitude: the breath of friendſhip expanded Conſtance's heart, and while ſhe looked at her viſitor, ſhe conſidered her as the angel of conſolation. She appeared under thirty years of age, and had all that eaſe about her which is acquired by living in the

the great world: ſhe was as tall as beauty would admit of, her face was uncommonly fine, and her behaviour and addreſs captivated, by a mixture of the moſt graceful condeſcenſion with a commanding dignity.

After a converſation of near half an hour, in which ſhe diſplayed talents equal to her external attractions, and from which Conſtance collected that her new acquaintance was apprized of many circumſtances reſpecting her, Lady George propoſed that as her carriage was waiting, and ſhe was going for an airing, ſhe ſhould, if it was agreeable, accompany her: change of air ſhe had before mentioned as adviſable for her, and ſhe preſt her to go with her. This kindneſs Conſtance accepted, and was ſo much revived by the atmoſphere of Hyde Park, that her ladyſhip inſiſted on calling her the next day at the ſame hour. To one who had undergone a tedious confinement, theſe civilities were too valuable to be refuſed, and her new friend promiſed to be with her, or, in caſe ſhe was otherwiſe engaged, to ſend the coach for her.

Matters went on thus for about a week: Lady George never failed to call on her daily for an airing, and ſhe, whoſe recovery was much facilitated, and her ſpirits cheared by her kindneſs, regarded her with reſpect and gratitude. One day, in the courſe of converſation, her ladyſhip remarked on Conſtance's very ſolitary manner of life, and inquired if ſhe meant to continue in it: when ſhe found ſhe did

did not, and learnt what ſhe was in queſt of, ſhe objected to her plan, and ſtated her reaſons.

In her obſervations, which were not without weight, Conſtance acquieſced; but ſhe ſaid that as whatever ſhe engaged in, would be for no longer a certainty than till her friends came to England, ſhe might bear to be uncomfortable, if ſhe could avoid cenſure, which was what ſhe moſt dreaded. You are very prudent, ſaid her adviſer, and I will put you in a better method than either of theſe. Come and ſpend this time with me: it will be proper you ſhould go into the country as ſoon as you can: we ſhall leave town ſhortly, let me have the pleaſure of contributing to the reſtoration of your health and ſtrength.

Conſtance acknowledged her obligations to Lady George Brenville, but declined her invitation, ſaying, ſhe could not think of taking advantage of her generoſity by intruding herſelf on her after ſo ſlight an acquaintance. Theſe reaſons were not admitted, and her ladyſhip, with a ſmile, anſwered that ſhe was perhaps better acquainted with her than ſhe imagined; at leaſt, ſaid ſhe, I know enough of you to be convinced I ſhall be a gainer by your company: beſide, ſhe continued, I will take all the riſque of finding you ſomething very terrible, on myſelf: you muſt come; I am ſure this uncomfortable way of living can do you no good, ſo I will not be refuſed.

An offer ſo friendly, ſo eligible, ſo honorable, and which would ſo effectually ſhield her from the dangers,

dangers ſhe foreſaw, Conſtance could not reject; the rank of her who made it prevented all diſtruſt, and ſhe only wiſhed that a longer acquaintance had made it as prudent on Lady George Brenville's part as it was advantageous on her's: but her precipitation ſtill further recommended her to Conſtance, as it proved how ſuperior her generoſity and benevolence were to the caution and ſuſpicion of low minds. In order to facilitate what ſhe ſeemed to have moſt earneſtly at heart, her ladyſhip ſettled every thing neceſſary to the removal, and as if it had been a ſubject ſhe had thought on from the commencement of their connection, with wonderful addreſs obviated all difficulties, and overcame all objections: ſhe preſt her to come to her the next day; but this Conſtance begged her not to inſiſt on, as ſhe muſt then leave Mrs. Langrivier, whoſe attention to her merited conſideration, abruptly, and ſhe named that day ſe'nnight: this was thought too long a ſpace, the day after the next was then fixed on, and ſhe prepared to quit her lodgings.

At noon on the morrow, Lady George called on her, and took her, with ſuch of her things as the coach would carry, to her new habitation, which was in Groſvenor-ſtreet: ſhe introduced her to her huſband, who received her, not only with politeneſs but cordiality, and tried to prevail on her to return no more to her former dwelling: hearing however, that ſhe was the next day to become of their family, he yielded, and Lady George, after an airing, ſet her

her down at Mrs. Langrivier's. In the evening her chairmen came for the remainder of her clothes, and at the appointed hour, on the enſuing day, ſhe took leave of her kind landlady, who expreſt much joy at the pleaſing proſpect before her.

CHAP. XXIX.

INITIATION.

AN hour completely ſettled her in her abode. She found company was expected to dinner, and therefore haſtened to dreſs; but Lady George coming into her room, inſiſted on her not hazarding catching cold by changing her gown.—I will make an apology for you, ſaid ſhe, and the time will be much better ſpent in taking a walk in the ſquare:—we do not dine till ſix, you will have time for every thing you can want when we return, and if you can walk without fatigue, it will certainly do you good.—They went together to the garden within the ſquare, and met many of Lady George's friends, to

to whom Conſtance was introduced, and by whom ſhe was ſo well received that the novelty of their acquaintance was in a few minutes forgotten.

It was ſeven o'clock before dinner was ſerved up: the company conſiſted of about a dozen ladies and gentlemen, and between nine and ten the former retired to the drawing-room, which was filled with card-tables. One of the ladies aſked how many were expected, to which Lady George anſwered, that ſhe ſhould have a very ſmall party, not more than ſixty:—I told you, ſaid ſhe, it would be a ſnug meeting, and we open only two rooms.—In about an hour the company began to come in, and the tables were preſently filled: Conſtance did not play, and as there were many ladies whom ſhe had known at Mrs. Stavenell's, ſhe did not want amuſement. It gave her no great pleaſure to ſee Lord Farnford, for though his behaviour had ceaſed to be exceptionable, a chill came over her whenever he approached, which always embarraſſed her: he took the firſt opportunity of ſpeaking to her, and there was a greater degree of ſatisfaction on his countenance than ſhe wiſhed to ſee: after a few minutes general converſation, thoſe ladies who had before been talking to her, withdrew to a diſtance, and he embraced the occaſion to expreſs his joy at the recovery of one who, he ſaid, however ill ſhe had treated him, muſt ever be dear to him, and to aſſure her that it was not want of reſpect, but a fear of offending or alarming her, that had made him forego the honour of

waiting

waiting on her. He ſeemed in one of his moſt rational moods, and Conſtance told him what had happened at Mrs. Aiſtrey's had been explained to her, and how much it would gratify her if theſe circumſtances were made known to Mrs. Aiſtrey. And why, ſaid his lordſhip, did you not ſend Berneil to them to clear it up? ſhe replied, that he did not chuſe to do it as ſhe wiſhed, and added, that ſhe would herſelf have written to Mrs. Aiſtrey, had ſhe not feared, as Captain Berneil had differed from her, and they had parted on ill terms, that he would not only not ſupport her aſſertions but deny them, and that by this attempt ſhe ſhould render her veracity ſtill more ſuſpected. Pray, ſaid Lord Farnford, on what ſubject could you and Berneil quarrel?—O, ſhe replied, a little confounded by the queſtion, he is not ſuch a gentleman as I would be under obligations to: he has neither ſpirit nor honour to do a good action for its own ſake.—I believe I underſtand you, he anſwered, you are quite right in your opinion of him; had he meant to ſerve you, he would not have troubled you with a viſit to know whether you *choſe* he ſhould do for you what could not but be very acceptable. Juſt as he had ſpoken, up came Lady Emma Peryton: her ſurprize at meeting Miſs Fitzarthur was not great, but her joy appeared exceſſive; ſhe overpowered her with expreſſions of kindneſs, which Conſtance, who had not forgotten the forgery of the letters to Lord Calorne, could not return:

return: her heart was rent by ten thouſand painful reflections, and ſhe dropt the tribute of a tear to the memory of her beloved Lady Maria.

As thoſe of the company who had dined, ſtaid ſupper, ſhe foreſaw that it would be late before they ſeparated, and, finding herſelf ſoon very weary, at a little after eleven ſhe begged Lady George's permiſſion to retire; this requeſt was complied with, and one of her ladyſhip's women ordered to attend her. The ſcene ſhe had quitted for a long time prevented her ſleeping; the noiſe, the lights, the company were ſtill preſent, and ſhe determined to avoid being again at one of the *ſmall card-parties* and *ſnug meetings*, till ſhe was better able to bear fatigue.

Reflecting on Lord Farnford's behaviour ſhe could not but perceive that though he was profuſe in his expreſſions of regard for her, he did not once propoſe rendering her that ſervice which was ſo eſſential to her peace, the inſiſting on Captain Berneil's explaining the affair at Mr. Aiſtrey's: ſhe ſcorned to aſk a favour of him, and had therefore forborn mentioning it, not without hope that, if he had the leaſt ſpark of honour, he would, of himſelf, do that which was ſo evidently pointed out to him as an opportunity of realizing his profeſſions: but ſhe did not yet know the Earl of Farnford.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

EDUCATION.

ABOUT nine the next morning ſhe roſe, and heard people ſtirring near her: ſhe opened her room door, hoping, if ſhe ſaw any of the ſervants, to learn of them at what hour the family met; and was aſtoniſhed when ſhe found the noiſe was occaſioned by children who ſeemed to be in the oppoſite apartment: one of the maids came out of it with a baby in her arms, and, ſtaring at Miſs Fitzarthur, aſked her if ſhe was not well that ſhe roſe ſo early. She ſoon gave her to underſtand that ſhe was a ſtranger to the œconomy of the houſe, by deſiring to know at what hour Lord and Lady George Brenville breakfaſted. My lord, anſwered the young woman, never gets up till two, but my lady always breakfaſts by twelve. Conſtance then took notice of the child, and inquired if it was her ladyſhip's; ſhe was told it was, that there were five of them, and invited to come into the nurſery to ſee them. Thither ſhe went, and perceiving that ſhe ſhould have ample leiſure

leiſure before breakfaſt, as they were going to walk in the ſquare, ſhe propoſed accompanying them: they ſeemed very happy in her regard, and ſhe was no leſs pleaſed with her new aſſociates. During their walk, ſhe aſked the eldeſt girl, who was about ſeven years old, and did not appear deficient in underſtanding, what ſhe was learning: I don't learn any thing now, ſaid the child: ma'mſelle is gone away. And who is to teach you? returned Conſtance. Mamma will when ſhe has time, ſhe anſwered; but ſhe has no time now. This it required no extraordinary degree of faith to believe, and Conſtance hoped if ſhe could ſupply her want of leiſure, that ſhe might make ſome return for Lady George's kindneſs, and be on that account ſpared from attending all her parties and amuſements.

On their return, ſhe took Miſs Brenville into her room to try where it would be neceſſary to begin: ſhe found her ignorant of the very firſt rudiments of learning, and that ſhe had been ſo long uſed to idleneſs that it was impoſſible to fix her attention: ſhe tried all that perſuaſion would do; but little Miſs had run wild, and nothing ſhort of compulſion could have any effect; unwilling to diſguſt her, ſhe took her back to the nurſery, and carried the book which was to be the teſt with her: ſhe tried the next child, a boy between five and ſix years of age; but he at the onſet grew ſtubborn, and, as if he had been accuſtomed to ſuch teachers only as he could rule, told her frankly he did not like reading, made

a face

a face at her, and ran away. The next, a lovely boy of four years old, the nurſes ſaid was the beſt tempered of all: him ſhe addreſt, he began to cry, and was not to be meddled with. The two others, as they were too young to have formed averſions, Conſtance hoped to win by kind uſage, to love her, and ſuffer her to play with them: ſhe took the fourth, a girl of eighteen months old on her knee: but a much ſtronger perſon could not have held her, ſhe ſcreamed, roared, and kicked ſo violently, that, leſt ſhe ſhould diſturb thoſe of the family who were not yet up, ſhe was obliged to place her immediately on the floor. The youngeſt, whoſe ſpirit had not half a year to ſtiffen in, ſhe thought ſhe could not offend: he let her take him very quietly, but the jealouſy of the others made it neceſſary to reſtore him to his nurſe to preſerve him from their fury; for they now, with one accord, tried to pull him off her lap. After having made this experiment, Conſtance left the nurſery, convinced that if the reſt of Lady George's houſhold was no better ordered than this moſt valuable part of it, little gratification could be expected from being her companion.

Before noon, her ladyſhip ſent her woman to know, if it would be agreeable to her to breakfaſt with her then in the dreſſing-room. Conſtance immediately went down, and found Lady George ſitting in her night-cap and powdering-dreſs. Good morning to you my dear Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid ſhe, what dreſt ſo ſmart already! ſurely you have been up a great

while! ſhe could ſcarcely find terms to expreſs her aſtoniſhmentent at hearing ſhe had been out. I, ſaid ſhe, am but juſt awake, we did not go to bed till paſt five, and indeed raking kills me; yet I cannot give it up: if it was not for ſummer in the country, and a trip to the ſea-coaſt, nobody could hold it. Her countenance confirmed the truth of her obſervation; her eyes were ſunk into her head, ſhe was pale, her ſpirits were exhauſted, and ſhe looked as if ſlowly recovering from a fit of ſickneſs. But ſhe was preſently rouſed by the entrance of her mantua-maker; her langour was entirly forgotten, and the time of breakfaſt, improved to the utmoſt, was not more than ſufficient to diſcuſs the important ſubject of trimming a gown.

As ſoon as it was concluded, Lady George went to dreſs for the morning, and Conſtance would have left her, but ſhe was detained to hear the plan for the day, and was aſked into how much of it ſhe would enter: that which was called in the language of high life, the morning, was to be devoted to a dejeuné and concert in Piccadilly: at four ſhe was to return to dreſs again: ſhe was engaged out to dinner, and to the opera in the evening. This ſhe ſaid was a leiſure day, as ſhe had time for every thing, and ſhe urged Miſs Fitzarthur to accompany her through the whole of it; but on her repreſenting the neceſſity of her being yet very cautious, ſhe excuſed her from all, excepting the opera, and promiſed to be at home very early: the coach was to carry

ERRATA. VOL. II.

Page 5, l. 15, for *dejuné* read *dejéuné*, p. 8, l. 2, for *ingenious* r. *ingenuous*, p. 26, l. 14, for *of* r. *off*, p. 42, l. 20, for *of* r. *in*, p. 62, l. 23, for *the* r. *their*, p. 82, l. 27, after *deſert* inſert *her*, p. 84, l. 7, for *fictitious* r. *factitious*, p. 96, l. 11, after *former*, inſ. *having*, p. 99, l. 6, for *interfered* r. *added*, p. 101, l. 23, for *ſingular* r. *ſimilar*, p. 107, l. 13, for *confidant* r. *confidante*, p. 110, l. 21, for *your* r. *abſolute*, p. 115, *l.* 19, for *for* r. *far*, p. 116, l. 3, for *it* r. *them*, p. 117, l. 8, dele *do with*, p. 121, l. 4, for, *as* r. *As*, p. 124, l. 4, for *leaſt* r. *leſt*, p. 129, l. 3, for *was* r. *were*, l. 18, for *new* r. *now*, p. 133, l. 23, for *aſk* r. *aſks*, p. 140, l. 15. dele *that*, p. 141, l. 6, for *leaſt* r. *leſt*, p. 150, l. 21, for *contined* r. *continued*, p. 153, l. 6, for *ſhould* r. *would*, p. 155, *l.* 13, for *hand-ſhaking* r. *ſhaking hands*, l. 14, for *taken* r. *token*, p. 161, l. 12, for *Miſs* r. *Mr.* p. 165, l. 7, for *would* r. *could*, p. 167, l. 9, dele 2d *that*, p. 176, l. 18, for *was* r. *were*, p. 182, l. 7, for *to* r. *too*, p. 183, l. 21, for *precipiece* r. *precipice*, p. 185, l. 8, for *deſerve* r. *deſerves*, p. 187, l. 8, after *it* inſert *not*, p. 188, l. 7, r. *that*: p. 209, l. 23, for *excepting* r. *expecting*, p. 211, l. 5, *as*. r. *As*, p. 214, l. 28, before *any* inſert *diſdaining*.

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carry Conſtance to the place where her ladyſhip dined, and they were to go on together to the Hay-market. But, my dear, ſaid ſhe, it will be very uncomfortable to you to dine alone. O, anſwered Conſtance, I need not do that, for I can, with your leave, dine with the little folks: their dinner will be much fitter for me than ſuch a one as I had yeſterday. No, ſaid Lady George, you cannot do ſo; I do not know what they are to have, beſide I believe they dine by two o'clock.

The hour was no objection with Conſtance, and her ladyſhip ſent her woman to inquire what was provided for the nurſery: the anſwer brought was—potatoes and bread. I told you, ſaid Lady George, that their dinner would not do for you: but perhaps Carwell dines at home; he will like very well dining at breakfaſt time, and you may have the cloth laid in the little parlour whenever you chuſe it.

Who Carwell was, Conſtance could not gueſs: concluding, however, that Lady George would not propoſe any thing improper, ſhe ſuffered her to make the neceſſary inquiry. The reply was, that Mr. Carwell had deſired to dine at three, and her ladyſhip, after having with much kindneſs deſired her to mention what ſhe choſe, went out. When ſhe was gone, Conſtance aſked the ſervant who her lady meant by Carwell, and learnt that he was the chaplain: on farther converſation ſhe found that he was a relation of the family, and that his reliance was ſolely on it.

END OF VOLUME THE SECOND.

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